

## Harry Potter - the Power Unknown

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### Chapter – 1

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#### **Albus Dumbledore was very happy.**

His life was one of hardship from the beginning, struggle in the middle and finally it was fulfillment time now, and thankfully before he could reach the end of his life. His family had been on the poor side and he and his brother had had to compromise their wants and desires to a very great extent.

His mother had been a squib and his father was almost one. It was very fortunate his brother and himself had strong Magic in them. He specially had an impressive magical core. His brother had been content to test his own Magic by experimenting on rather unfortunate and inappropriate charms on various animals and his specialty was goats.

**But he, Albus was very ambitious, calculative and extremely cunning. He was manipulative and would do anything to get his way, *anything*.**

He had to wait for almost an eternity for amassing true power though. Not that he had been waiting in the wings, though for all these years. He had by his sixth year as a Ravenclaw (Slytherin had been a close second according to the hat) realized his full magical strength and he had complimented that by increasing his magical core by blood rituals that were extremely dark in nature.

He had been very, very careful about those rituals and had made sure no one was aware. He passed out from Hogwarts, passing his NEWTS with sixteen 'outstandings', taking care no one would ever read the real Albus Dumbledore.

He joined Flourish and Blotts and devoured books on various magical subjects, like Occlumency, Legilimency, spell crafting, Ancient Magic.

His strength had always been Transfiguration and in the next year and a half he took his Master's in Transfiguration and passed it with honours.

On the side he had delved into the Dark Arts and gathered a double masters degree's worth of knowledge in it. Among the rituals he had performed one of the darker rituals had consisted of adding special magical talents. He had after much effort succeeded in becoming a partial metomorphagus. He could change his eye colour, hair colour and length, nose and lips.

He used that to create an alternate identity. He became a young man who would go around in anonymity into Knockturn Alley often and became very knowledgeable about the shops dealing in the Dark Arts, like Borgin and Burkes, Aberfonty Arts, Windell's Place and the like.

He made friends with all the owners of these shops by working part time in the evenings in all of them, and managed to steal a huge amount of valuable books, using his Transfiguration skills to create identical copies, that he used to palm off as the originals.

He collected a vast library of books in this fashion in the next five years he worked in Diagon Alley and Knockturn Alley. He waited for an opportunity patiently all this while, to realize his life's ambition.

**POWER. MONEY. POSITION. A VERY LONG LIFE TO ENJOY IT ALL.** That was all, he wanted from life, wanted in his life, for his happy living.

**Power** he decided was in Hogwarts. That was the seat of real power, from where he could slowly extend his influence to the Ministry and the entire Wizarding world with the students he would cultivate.

He was by nature careful and the moment he started his forays into the Dark Arts he had been exceptionally good-natured on the outside till it became second nature to him.

**Money**, he was obsessed by it as he had not the good fortune to have it in plenty. He was a genius in stealing money. He used yet another identity to create his first hundred thousand galleons by dint of fraud and malpractice and from there he made many more millions

legally, until he never had to ever worry about money for the next few hundred years.

**Position**, was the Head master's post in Hogwarts, supreme Mugwump and chief of the Wizengamot and many other positions of respectability and responsibility in the Ministry, so that he would be the real power in his world without seeming to aspire for it.

**A very long life to enjoy it all**, this was the toughest of them all, he planned carefully for a long time building credentials and respectability, before approaching Nicholas Flammel.

Albus always felt his friendship with one of the greatest wizards was his single greatest achievement for, from him he learned about the Philosopher's Stone and while Flammel had been careful, he could not keep anything from the great swindler that Albus had become by that time.

From Flammel he learnt the way to make the Stone himself. He made it in large quantities and stocked it in his vault. He then waited patiently for a chance to cash in.

His chance came with Grindelwald. Thanks to his multiple identities, no one associated him with the powerful assistant of Grindelwald, Joseph Krieger the assassin who helped Grindelwald with many of his more insane ideas.

Dumbledore by then had accepted a junior position in the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He was an apprentice to the current Transfiguration Master there and before very little time had passed, he was a certainty to take the Head of Transfiguration post as well as Head of Gryffindor.

Soon he became Head of Gryffindor and also Head of Transfiguration. He also became very respectable in society and he rapidly built up on that respectability by his first forays into the Ministry as a member of the Wizengamot.

He made sure to have as many contacts around the world by doing little favours for as many people as he could, making sure he would have a lot of strings to pull if he needed to do so.

Joseph Heifer was a release for Albus. He indulged in that role, relaxing immensely, with carefree abandon. In that role he had no need to pretend and no need act contrary. It was a role he cherished and it was a role he performed to the best of his ability.

He enjoyed a great rapport with Grindelwald, sharing ideas, learning, learning not only from his brilliance in the Dark Arts but also learning about the most effective ways to kill, magnificent mind magic, more than he ever hoped to know on all this.

Albus also followed the muggle news and he also learned about guns and bombs and acquired a proficiency in firing bullets with deadly accuracy.

The only thing he did not create was horcruxes. With the Stone, he felt he had enough to prolong his life for ever. Besides, with all the Dark Arts he was doing, he felt the creation of horcruxes with intent to increase his life span would cause a big strain on him to perform as a genial man, who had the well being of the Wizarding world in his heart.

It was a juggle to play so many roles, but Albus was a master at it. He reveled in it and regarded as a personal achievement to succeed at it as well.

He sadly relinquished his role as Joseph Heifer when he killed Grindelwald in cold blood, standing by his side as they were chatting and laughing together over drinks as they contemplated their next insane idea.

Albus morphed into himself, and then removed all the books and artifacts from Grindelwald's, library and his vault key. Grindelwald had been very clever. He had a vault in the name of Bob Smithy in which he had stored all of his most important documents, money and dark artifacts.

The vault in the name of Grindelwald had only a hundred galleons in it and was no loss when it was freezed by the Ministry. The popular theory when that had come to light was that he had a huge dungeon under his headquarters where he had stashed all of his wealth.

After removing these, he destroyed the hideout of his 'dead Master' totally and with many cuts, abrasions and wounds he left for Hogwarts, where he made sure to put everything he had pilfered away before emerging tired, worn-out and fatigued but triumphant.

He became a hero overnight. **Albus Dumbledore had finally arrived.** It had taken him over a hundred years but he was right there. It was not as if he had to worry about his life (Thanks to the Stone) or anything else for that matter.

**He had the power, the position (an Order of Merlin, First Class), money, name and fame. And he reveled in it.**

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About twenty years before he had his eye on a young boy called Tom Riddle. He was a classical case of abuse, neglect and frustration put together.

He watched, amused as the boy delved into the Dark Arts, sometimes even itching to help and mentor him. He admired when he killed Myrtle with the basilisk, though he shuddered when he thought of such a creature in the control of this boy.

It was after the basilisk incident he decided to oppose the boy as Riddle had now control over a beast that could harm him, if Riddle so desired.

It was irony that Riddle came to Grindelwald to be trained. As Joseph heifer, Albus took special effort to know what the boy was all about and was pleasantly surprised to find a mind so devious and twisted.

But that mind would also rebel at having to follow Albus's schemes as Riddle wanted only revenge against a world that treated him unfairly. Albus never saw the desire for immortality or the deep want for world domination as Riddle had hidden it so cleverly from the dreaded two.

Both Grindelwald and Heifer trained Riddle for a little time, before he left for Albania to delve deeper into the Dark Arts. Albus would regret letting him go and would forever curse himself for not seeing the

potential or the ability of that young man who would give him such a headache in the future.

Albus was now getting on in his years and it was after the defeat of Grindelwald that he first started taking the Stone. He had already made enough to make him live for more than a thousand years. He had a huge part of his vault filled with it.

Fame had its disadvantages as well. Albus was now always in the public eye and it was no longer possible for him to do the many things that the public would definitely look upon with a jaundiced eye.

He started scouting for apprentices, persons like him who were not leaders, but followers. He found two of them after a very long search that had to be conducted with great secrecy and extremely cautiously.

Arthur Weasley was a man after his own heart. A man with so good-natured an exterior, it would be hard to read him as anything else. He joined Albus by being his contact in the Ministry initially. Later he kept his unimaginative position as the perfect cover for his dubious activities for Albus.

He had a vault in another name that he had filled with money for services rendered. He used a little of this money when things were a bit too tight in his family budget.

Not even his wife, a lovely lady with exemplary morals was aware of his dual role and indeed his dual personality. Arthur's one weakness was his family. Albus did not like it, but then you could not have it all. Arthur was fiercely protective of his wife and later on his many children, who fortunately followed his wife's high morals and sense of propriety rather than his loose ones.

He knew his wife would be devastated if she ever came to know of his dark side, but the attraction of money caused by the demon of poverty and his lack of standing in his world that urged him not to let this pass him by.

The other apprentice that Albus chose was Peter Pettigrew. By the time Peter came to Hogwarts, Voldemort had already happened. The

Houses were sharply divided and there was a lot of politics inside and outside.

Peter was known to him from before of Hogwarts, by means of a small help he rendered to his father. Mr. Pettigrew was a decent man who lived on the same street as his own father. His father had asked him to help Mr. Pettigrew and Albus had complied. He had initially greeted Peter as a son of his father's very young friend, but the eagerness and the admiration he received had made him pause and review.

He had carefully groomed him from his first year so that by the time his seventh year rolled Pettigrew was a man who would kill, plunder, destroy, rape and maim for his mentor. He was already rich beyond his means and by his fifth year he was the eyes and ears of the school, especially after he became animagus.

It was Albus who asked him to become a death eater and infiltrate Voldemort's camp and also become a member of the Order of the Phoenix that he started, to bring down what was proving to be a very real threat to his existence.

Fawkes was the one unknown commodity in Albus's life. He had just appeared the moment Albus had become Headmaster. From where he had come and who had owned him before was something Albus did not know before. He was forced to accept him as the phoenix would simply not leave.

Albus was initially very cautious and also slightly scared as he alone knew how unnatural it was that a phoenix of all creatures would befriend him, who had been Grindelwald's closest associate, who had participated in gruesome murders and terrible orgies.

But as days and even months went by, he relaxed, as Fawkes, did not do anything out of the ordinary. He even flashed Albus wherever he would need to go.

Besides Fawkes gave him a prestige, a standing in society as the true Leader of the Light and it was beneficial in so many ways that after some time Albus let go fully in front of this phoenix and even developed a mild feeling of affection for him.

All things came to a head when he finally found a way to get rid of Riddle who was now going under a ridiculous name of Voldemort. He had been to interview a divination Professor, not that he meant to give her the job, but well, it was his evening's relaxation.

He had conducted the interview at his brother's bar The Hog's Head and was trying his best to breach the huge chasm that had come between them. If only Aberforth would agree, it would mean a wonderful spy at Hogsmeade for him. But Aberforth was uncaring.

Trelawney had sprouted the Prophecy about the child who would be born as the seventh month dies. Another person had unfortunately heard one half of the Prophecy, but had been found out before the most important part.

Albus was thrilled. He waited and watched. Harry Potter was born on the thirty-first day of July and Neville Longbottom was born a day before.

While Longbottom was the pure blood, Potter, though a half blood was the more powerful as his family was said to have been descended from the Founders' themselves. Old Harrison Potter was tight lipped about any thing concerned with heritage and ancestry.

Albus salivated as he thought of the vast treasures that the Potter vaults would hold the power that he would get if he had control over them. He started planning to acquire just that.

Peter killed the elderly potters in their own home and started sowing seeds of distrust among the firm friends of James Potter, Remus Lupin and Sirius black.

He also came to know that Snape a Slytherin, who studied with Peter and the others, had been the one to hear half the Prophecy and had informed Voldemort about it.

He made sure that Voldemort would go after the Potters with a few hints from Peter. The day Voldemort had decided to go after the Potters was the day Snape had come extremely bedraggled to see him and offer his services as a spy as he wanted to get out from Voldemort's service.



Albus wondered. Snape had stiffly told him he was disappointed and disillusioned by Voldemort and he would do practically anything to get away from him. Even swear on his magic to protect the child of his most hated enemy.

Albus was aching with the need to laugh at this puny, silly, standoffish, stupid, ugly boy who was in reality was not even able to protect himself from the pranks of two immature classmates was here wanting to swear on his magic to protect Harry Potter.

Snape had also told him that Voldemort wanted to try for the post of Professor and to spy on Albus. Albus indulged his need to laugh by emitting a gentle smile.

He thought for a while and realized Snape could prove to be a valuable ally in the future, especially for finding the horcruxes that the idiot Riddle had gone and created.

He smiled gently at the boy and asked for his oath on his magic and life to protect the child Harry Potter as his own, ahead of not only his life but also others as well.

**That one mistake would cost Albus everything in the future.**

Snape gave it and went away with the post of potions Professor that he would start serving from that September.

Albus also had told the Prophecy to the Potters and warned them to be careful and advised them to go under the fidelus charm. In the times of such uncertainties, he masterminded Peter to sow the seeds of distrust and had cleverly manipulated the Potters to ask Peter take the place of secret keeper from Black, without the knowledge of anyone, even him.

Exactly a week later the Potters were killed. Voldemort had come there with Peter and had killed James; he was ripped from his body by Albus who killed him from behind. Albus then went upstairs, where Lily was holding Harry and crying in horror and terror, whispering all the time, begging, he really did not know whom, to please let go of Harry.

He smiled at her and killed her. Still smiling he cast a dark curse in the shape of a lightning bolt, using the blood from Voldemort's body to link the curse to Voldemort, when he would come back to his own body, using a horcrux.

He then went away and everything went beautifully according to plan. He placed Potter with his relatives and placed a mild hating charm on them. Potter would look upon him as an angel from heaven when he would come to Hogwarts. Black had been sent to Azkaban for good without trial.

Harry Potter would be his completely and his usefulness would come to an end when he became seventeen years of age, when he would receive his inheritance.

Albus had waited for more than a century to attain power and prestige. He could wait another sixteen years easily.

End of Chapter – 1

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## Chapter – 2

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Severus Snape decided he had a thoroughly wretched existence. His was a life that had been created to ridicule, to mock and to belittle. Not that he was a kind creature. Far from it, as he would acknowledge it first, but he felt he really did not deserve the breaks he did get in his life. All of them were uniformly lousy.

He had joined the death eaters to get some power and to do his bit against the establishment so to speak. That had failed miserably. While he may not be a good man or an affable one by any standard, he was not for killing anyone for the fun of it.

For all his ugly looks, awkward manners and poor demeanor he was blessed with a brilliant mind that was lightning quick, analytical, logical and he could arrive at correct conclusions almost all the time.

His knowledge in the subtle art of potion making was awe-inspiring. He loved his potions and he loved the Dark Arts more. He was ever careful not to be addicted by them and he knew as much as if not more than Voldemort with regards to it.

His mannerisms made it very difficult to be a friend to anyone. He guarded his heart jealously so that no one could get in and hurt him. He had been hurt time and again by his parents and later by his Housemates and others at Hogwarts. That was what drove him to Voldemort in the first place.

He secretly craved for some love in his life, but that seemed unlikely now, he thought bitterly.

After the fiasco with Voldemort he had escaped by the skin of his teeth by running to Dumbledore and begging him to save him. That alone almost killed Snape. He hated to beg to even ask for anything, again fate had defeated him. He begged and as a last resort offered an oath on his magic to save the son of his most hated enemy.

Harry Bloody Potter. The reason he had turned from the Dark to the Light.

He could not stomach being a part of killing a baby because of some Prophecy. And if a Prophecy said this child would kill Voldemort, then he felt he should do everything he could to make sure he would be able to. By then he had enough of being a Death Eater to join in the plans for the execution of the baby.

He hated Dumbledore. He was highly intuitive and something about Dumbledore struck him as very wrong. Being near him always made him uncomfortable and his presence always made him wary, alert and cautious.

To think he had to go and give that obnoxious man an oath, he thought snorting into his drink.

After giving the oath, he had been slightly relieved, though. He had written a letter addressed to Lily Evans Potter and had informed her of his decision to leave the Death Eaters and of the oath he had taken to protect her child to prove to Dumbledore of his sincerity and also offered his services to her as well. He had signed it in blood to assure her of his truthfulness and sincerity.

He received no reply.

The dark, bleak fact was that he had no one. Why did such things always happen to him he wondered? He wished there was someone, anyone who would show him some friendship, some concern.

The years passed. Snape grew more and more bitter and lonely, having not a single soul to care for nor having a single soul that cared. It was now about eight years after the downfall of the Dark Lord.

On the Beltane of that year which fell on the last day of April everything was to change for Severus Snape.

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Harry Potter was nine and a half years old. He was currently residing in his cupboard for somehow jumping on to the rooftop of his school, trying to escape Dudley and his friends. He just didn't understand how he could be running to save his skin at one moment and be on the rooftop the next. He sighed.

He had been in the cupboard for three straight days now, being let out to use the facilities twice a day and the food was -- he sighed again. He should be grateful for small mercies he supposed. They could have starved him. He would have suffered more then.

For as long as he remembered, he had cooked; cleaned and washed for these people he called family. At first he had been baffled that it was only him and not Dudley who was asked to do chores. But slowly he understood, he had a different place in that household and the first rule had been never to question anything.

He lay down there and wished and wished. Why didn't his parents have any more relatives? Why did they have to go and drink and die in a car crash and above all why did he have to survive with only a scar on his forehead, while his parents should die.

He was a lonely boy who had had to rely on only his smarts to survive not only at No. 4 Privet Drive, but also outside with Dudley and his friends treating him like their favorite punching bag.

Mostly he succeeded, but sometimes, things went out of control and he was always confused when that happened as it was always extraordinary.

It was April; the winter was leaving, with beautiful flowers beginning to bloom. He always loved the spring and the summer time as he could manage with the weather then. Once autumn set in, and it started getting chilly, he suffered as his winter wear was sadly lacking as was everything else.

He sighed again, from the bottom of his heart and waited patiently for the Dursleys to get over their anger and let him out.

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Lily was a brilliant witch. She would make our own Hermione look insipid and a dunderhead. And she never raised her hand to show off her knowledge.

She thirsted after knowledge like a maniac. She did not concentrate only on current topics, but on a variety of subjects from ancient law

and magic to spell crafting, the wonders of Charms, Potions, Rituals, Dark Arts, Occlumency, Legilimency, everything. She was a walking encyclopedia, who actually understood all of this instead of parrot like repeating the texts and blindly following.

She was one of those genuine people who truly cared. Cared for her fellow human beings magical and otherwise, for the birds and the beasts that lived in the woods and the forests. She was not scared of defending even a Slytherin who would repay her with a 'mudblood' comment. If necessary she would do it again.

In her flowed a magical power so huge it was frightening and the magical gifts she had been blessed with were truly phenomenal. She had the gift of learning, remembering and understanding a text after perusing it only once. For her to re-read a text, meant mortals like us would never even understand it if we were specially tutored on it.

She also had what was a very rare gift. She could see auras. That was one reason she never made mistakes about people. She was also intuitive to the point of being able to see into the future.

She never highlighted all this and went about her life as normally as she could. No one had any inkling of any of these facts and she was happy to keep it so.

She had liked James from the beginning but had refused to pander to his ego by swooning at his feet like the others and so she made it a point to put him down as much as she could. She had enjoyed the verbal skirmishes they had with each other very much. Okay, she could concede, it was verbal from her side only, as James had started pursuing her seriously almost from her fourth year.

By her sixth year she had grown to love him very much as well, though it took her more than a year after that to tell him so. James had been ecstatic and they had had a relationship that really worked. Both of them had truly loved the other, and once they had got together, it had shown.

They had delighted in each other, understanding one another on a level that needed no words and no explanations of their actions. James had proposed and she had accepted happily. They had

married as soon as they had graduated and had never regretted it. James's parents were also happy for their only child whom they had loved more than life itself.

She had known Remus was a werewolf almost from the beginning though for her to understand what his aura, which was so different from the others, had meant.

The same way she could see even those that were invisible to the eye or under invisibility cloaks as their aura could not be concealed. She had seen an invisible Dumbledore many, many times around the school, listening to conversations and she had even seen him in the girl's dorms once.

After that she had never trusted him. She had come across mind magic in the fourth year and she had made it a priority to master Occlumency and Legilimency at the earliest. She had succeeded of course and mental intrusions were never a problem after that.

It was in her seventh year one day, when she had come across James complaining about his invisibility cloak that seemed to vanish a lot now-a-days. She had placated him, offering to place charms that would make it impossible for anyone to go off with it without his permission.

When they had parted to go to their respective classes, she had gone by a roundabout way to collect her book from the runes class, where she had left it after her class. She had suddenly stopped as she had felt a presence ahead of her that she recognized as Dumbledore's. By now she had mastered not only her skills of Occlumency and Legilimency but also to control her facial expressions of surprise, anger and the like.

She made herself invisible and also masked her magical presence so that even if Dumbledore could see auras, though that was highly unlikely, he would not be able to detect her.

She went slowly, stealthily and saw Dumbledore's aura and Pettigrew's aura deep in conversation. Dumbledore had placed invisible charms on himself, though he had not bothered about concealing his magical presence. Perhaps he thought no one in the

school was capable of such magic. Well he obviously thought wrong, and Pettigrew had pilfered James's cloak.

What they were conversing, she could not hear, as there were powerful silencing charms placed around them, but the fact Peter Pettigrew was this close to the Headmaster was shocking in itself.

Wasn't Pettigrew the shy type? Wasn't he the sniveling, cowering coward and couldn't say boo to a goose timid type? This certainly didn't look like that. So there was something going on between the two. Something that excluded the other three friends.

She did not say a word to James and the other two, though she kept a close watch on Peter. She had seen his aura when she had initially explored and learnt about them, when she had come to know she had been gifted with aura sight.

At that time she had seen a weak, powerless and insipid aura surround Peter and had at the time only pitied him, now she scanned him carefully and saw an aura that had at the time horrified her. It was an aura to run away from. It was a bleak aura, untrustworthy, and showed an extremely evil mind.

She was always careful with him after that. She wondered and thought deeply with the facts as she knew them, in front of her. Dumbledore was not what he seemed and now it seemed the same for Peter as well. Why? That was what she did not understand. What did Peter hide from James, Sirius and Remus? Why should he do so?

Did he not see how protective they were with Remus's secret, James even risking his life to save Snape's life and Sirius's school career and Remus's sanity by dragging Snape out from the Shrieking Shack during the full moon and after Remus had almost transformed fully.

She had the habit of writing her findings in her diary; she now started writing all her suspicions as well. She made her diary very secure and continued writing about her feelings, findings and her conclusions. She also wrote about all her gifts and how she had used them to assess and analyze and find out about others, especially Dumbledore and Peter.



She had a lot of premonitions especially after she got married and though she did not and could not know everything, she somehow felt when she became pregnant, her child, and her baby would be at the center of the Wizarding world. Her gut feelings and intuition had never let her down and so she was predictably excited.

But when, a few months after her beautiful son was born on the day of the Lammas, the last day of July, she had come to know of a Prophecy told by the great grand-daughter of the great Seer Cassandra Trelawney, she had been heart broken at first.

Then she had gathered herself and set her self to work. She doubted at first. It was Dumbledore who had come to them with the Prophecy. But again her inner intuition told her the Prophecy was true. But her logical brain rebelled, for the first time she was at war with herself, conflicting emotions ripping through her.

Her inner intuition won the war and then all Lily did was study ancient magic, write in her diary and prepare for the worst eventuality, a day when her child might be alone without his parents, to fend for himself.

She had never told James of her suspicions regarding the relationship between Peter and Dumbledore, for though he was very powerful magically and also powerful in the Wizarding world, he was too open and he was too trusting of Dumbledore as the ray of light at the end of the tunnel.

What could she say anyway? That she did not like both of them. That she had seen Dumbledore sneaking around in the girl's dorms? That she had seen Peter talking to Dumbledore secretly?

James would first ask how she knew and why the others had not seen them. She had yet to tell him about her aura sight and James would be hurt and it would drive a deep chasm between them.

Or James would laugh and go straight to Dumbledore and Peter and blurt it out. That more than anything alarmed her.

Again all she had on them had been the fact they apparently knew each other quite well. More than a Headmaster and a student should

know each other. She had not thought till much later that both of them were entirely contrary to what they portrayed.

The shock James had had when Dumbledore told them, one of the other three was a Death Eater had almost destroyed him. Lily instinctively turned in her mind to Peter, but she did feel bad for thinking that almost at once.

Peter was close to Dumbledore. While Dumbledore may be a little perverted, he was the leader of the Light and he was the master of a Phoenix that was his familiar. He surely would not allow Peter to turn away from the Light. So Lily never suspected Peter until it was too late for her and James.

That was the time when she had received a letter from Snape. It was sheer luck that she had been alone with little Harry, when the stilted letter came, signed in blood, telling her of the truthfulness and sincerity of Severus Snape.

Lily was not brilliant or quick thinking for nothing. She knew two things from the letter. Snape had taken an oath to protect *only* Harry. As such he would and could be loyal only to her baby, not Dumbledore, not Voldemort. The second was he was willing to help. Help in any way.

Dumbledore had not mentioned to them about Snape and that had been the starting point for Lily to understand the fact that Dumbledore, and because of him Peter, had had a totally different agenda.

Those times were times of great uncertainties and confusion, where people were simply carted off to Azkaban and even given the kiss without a trial, if the authorities were suspicious. The Potters were no exceptions when James's parents were killed in their own castle by one of them as the Potter castle had blood wards that would allow only specified persons that had been keyed in, the confusion and the suspicions among the friends also grew.

At the present time that list of people who had access to the Potter castle had been pitifully small. It had to be either Dumbledore or one of the three friends. James went into a depression and it was only the

fact he could also lose his wife and child that brought him out of it. That was yet another point against Dumbledore.

It was Dumbledore who suggested they move to Godric's Hollow, sometime in September. Lily's suspicions were confirmed. At Potter castle no one would be able to come and attack. In Godric's Hollow it would be a piece of cake as the wards were not so strong.

She berated herself for not trusting her instincts, and going along with everyone that Dumbledore the defeater of Grindelwald was the right man to take care of Voldemort as well.

Lily had started working. Hard. She had her will prepared and also made James prepare his. She suggested to James to leave everything to her and her will would leave everything to Harry in the event he went first. In the event she died first, she then requested James to trust her and allow her to prepare the will for him. James gladly left the depressing job to her, affixing his signature wherever she asked him to.

She prepared a will that had James known at the time would have questioned her sanity. She made Severus Snape the guardian of Harry James Potter in the event Harry survived what she was rapidly beginning to believe would be an attack by Voldemort and be blessed and approved by Dumbledore.

She left everything in Snape's control and with the help of the goblins arranged everything perfectly.

As long as she had trusted her intuition, every thing had been fine, but the moment she had trusted her logical reasoning that Dumbledore and Peter's actions were above suspicions, because of the phoenix, and because she had not wanted to think a leader of the light, a fighter for the cause would be on par with the evil all of them were trying destroy, her entire family was doomed.

As she prepared for what she was sure were her final days, she brushed angry tears away. What was the use of having such gifts that had showed her everything, but had become useless because she had not wanted to believe that Dumbledore and Peter could be evil?

What she had no clue was why were she and James targeted? Was it because he wanted Harry under his thumb so that he could be trained as perfect weapon? Or was it to control the enormous wealth of the Potters? Or was it because Albus Dumbledore was an ally of Voldemort?

That was a truly frightening thought and Lily could not help being scared if that were the case, especially now as she was sure it was Peter and Dumbledore who were the murderers of James's parents.

She did think of telling James and warning him, but every time she came close to doing so, something stopped her. After neglecting her intuition once and facing such grave consequences, she was scared to take any more chances. So she went ahead and made her plans.

What she feared came to pass. James was killed by Voldemort and she was killed by Dumbledore. As she died her last thoughts were only of one man. Not her husband. Not even her darling child.

They were of Severus Snape.

End of Chapter – 2

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## Chapter – 3

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It was a beautiful day, that day, the twenty eighth day of the month of April, more than eight years after the fall of Voldemort. Hogwarts was coming out of the rather severe winter they had that year. It was spring time now and the flowers were slowly beginning to come to life and prepare to dance away for the summer breeze.

It was breakfast time and the students and the Professors alike were in the Great Hall eating breakfast prepared deliciously by the house elves and sipping hot steaming cups of tea.

Severus Snape was scowling unaware of the delight of the bright day or the fact that the flowers were beginning to smile. He always had a scowl as a part of him, now for so many years that he wouldn't know what to do or how he would look, without it.

Albus was also sipping a cup of tea ruminating about how beautiful life was these days. No silly donkeys wanting to aspire for world domination. No standoffs in the Ministry, Arthur and Peter safe. Harry Potter miserable. Sirius black in prison for a life time. Remus Lupin, Merlin knows where and who cared any way.

He had the firm loyalty of his staff, his Order and his Ministry. He had to wait for, how many years was it now? He counted lazily and found he had less than half the time from when he had taken care of that illustrious family, for the Potter Vaults to become his.

He drew a deep breath of anticipation as he wondered, sipping his tea, as to what he should do with that type of wealth, that could not be measured or valued. Priceless was the word, he determined.

He smiled in genuine amusement as he thought of the naïveté people exhibited. For Merlin's sake, how could a one year old boy defeat a man who was an impressively strong and powerful wizard? But people hailed a fifteen month baby as the next world wonder. No doubt, then that these simple folks could be molded to believe in anything, if only one could play on their credulous emotions.

A flock of birds swooped down, bringing mail from loving mothers and strict fathers.

He also received some correspondence from Gringotts and the Ministry and so missed the startled look and a small gasp from his potions professor as he had two letters. Both from Gringotts. Sent in a secure pouch. That was what had startled Snape for a second. He always received his mail from them in a secure pouch, mainly to make sure, no one would poke into his business correspondence, but to receive two!

Both were addressed to him, he was scowling at them, thinking furiously under the scowl as to why they had sent two pouches, when the Headmaster turned to him and noticed the letters in his hand.

"Letters from Gringotts, Severus?" and waited laughing inside at the ignominy of this pathetic creature that would scowl at him and mutter something rude and scowl. It was an exercise he always indulged in and it never failed to amuse him.

Snape muttered something that no one could understand and making his excuses, left the table leaving a smiling Albus.

Snape was busy for the rest of the day that happened to be a Friday. He opened one pouch to find it was his routine statements and answers to his queries from the Wizarding bank.

His curiosity now kindled, he took out the other letter and slowly opened it. There was a slip of paper inside.

*Mr. Snape,*

*We, at Gringotts wish to speak to you, a matter of the most delicate nature. We have sent this letter on a Friday so it would be convenient for you to come to our bank tomorrow. It is in regard with a letter you sent to a lady nine years ago, signed in your blood. This letter will inflame itself on your reading the last word as the charm is placed on it. It is for your eyes only. Please do not show this to any one else lest it may hex them with an engorgio spell in the wrong place, that cannot be taken off. Do not bring anything except the contents of the other pouch as that will enable you to make your excuses to get away.*

*May your gold grow.*

*Runib.*

Snape frowned and then realizing he was in his private quarters, where there were no portraits and no outside influences, let his jaw hit the floor.

The lady, nine years ago! That was surely Evans. He had received no reply and he had been too proud to enquire about them to the Headmaster and had let it slide. Then they had died. What were up now that after all these years that Gringotts was referring to that letter and asking for him.

Possibilities whirled round and round inside his tired brain, as he sat there for most of the night contemplating, thinking back to the bitter events of so long ago. Why was the past coming up now, when he had been trying so hard to put it behind him, he wondered?

But think and try to analyze as much as he did, he could not arrive at any conclusions or make any sense of the whole thing. Well he would know it soon though. It was almost morning. Standing up, he stretched and conjuring a cup of hot tea, he sipped slowly and then, still thinking went to bed.

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The next morning he woke up late and felt disoriented for a minute, before remembering the mysterious letter and jumping out of his warm bed and casting the tempus charm, found to his dismay it was almost ten 'o' clock.

He gave a resigned groan and hurriedly washed and called an elf to bring him some breakfast and shoveled it down. He dressed, making a conscious effort to look presentable and then with a sudden thought it might make him look suspicious in the eyes of the Headmaster and the other Professors, sighed and dressed as usual.

He strode out and went to Albus's office to inform him of business at Gringotts and take his leave. Albus smilingly granted it and told Snape to in fact take the weekend off. "You look a bit pale Severus.

Why don't you take the rest of the week end off? A little outing could help you."

Snape was going to brush it off with a stilted 'thank you but I am fine', when he stopped for a second and then softly accepted it.

"Thank you, Sir. I do feel a bit off, not too bad though. If it will not be an absolute problem, then maybe, I could come back on Sunday night or Monday morning. Only if it is not a problem, though, otherwise," and he hesitated as though he was very uncomfortable about approaching Albus with such a request.

"Severus, you rarely take time off. Of course you may go." And Albus dismissed him with a smile, not giving another thought to it.

Severus did not waste another minute. He turned and walked swiftly with his robes billowing after him. He walked fast till he reached the edge of the wards and apparated the moment he crossed it and re-appeared in front of Gringotts.

He looked around for a second and walked inside into a new life.

He went inside and approached the first goblin seated, "I am here in response to a letter sent to me by Mr. Runib yesterday. Where and when may I be able to meet him?" he asked softly, so that no one would be able to understand his queries.

The goblin looked at him sharply for a second and then shocking him, stood up and came down, gesturing to Severus to follow him and took him through a series of doors, into a room that was surely not used for ordinary business. As they entered the room, where he presumed he would be told why he had been sent the letter, Snape felt a shift in the air.

He stopped, and looked around him, but was not able to discern anything or after the many twists and turns that he took, just where in the bank he was.

The room was huge and was completely enclosed on all sides and the door through which they had come in was the only way in and out. Four goblins stood at the door guarding it, telling Snape about the



importance of the room and by extension, the importance of what he was about to learn.

Contrary feelings of anxiety, excitement, curiosity and apprehension alternated within him and he suddenly felt what he would learn there would probably change his life forever. That again made him feel confused as he did not know whether it would be a good or a bad thing.

He shrugged to himself as a goblin that looked impressive, imperiously indicated to him to take his seat. The goblin who introduced himself as Runib requested him to wait for a few seconds.

There were four other impressive and decorative chairs placed two each on either side of Runib. Across the table, sat Snape, in a single chair, while his was comfortable was not elaborately carved or decorated.

So the elder goblins were expected, thought Snape as the situation turned more bizarre and rather scary. He was now completely at the mercy of these beings that were rather lacking when it came to being good natured.

Before he completely lost it and did something very foolish, like running out of the door, not that he would have succeeded four more goblins walked in authoritatively.

Runib stood up as did Snape, though; it must be confessed it was more out of fear, rather than respect. The goblins seemed pleased by his show of respect, though and politely requested him to sit down.

This time an old goblin, sat in the middle with the others, on either side of him.

Hot cups of tea were brought in and Snape accepted a cup when he was handed one, still a bit scared. But not so scared, that he did not first smell the cup and the tea for any potions that could be mixed with it, before realizing that the goblins could take it as an insult. He quickly lifted his head to apologize, he was startled to find them smiling.

“Good, you are suspicious.” The goblin in the center said with a grin that made him look terrifying and Snape was duly terrified. He was thinking he had not even made his will, when the goblin spoke.

“Mr. Snape you need not feel scared. We have not asked you to come here with a view to embarrass you. On the contrary we have asked you to come here to enlist your help as per the orders placed by Mrs. Potter shortly before her death.”

Snape felt his head reeling. So it was the letter he wrote Lily Evans. But why should the goblins ask him to be here because of the letter. He had to stop his thoughts as the goblin was speaking.

“What we will be telling you here will be totally confidential. We will in fact be placing you under a goblin protection spell, so that this information cannot be leached by any means including, veritaserum, truth spells, magical oaths or anything.”

Snape was petrified. What he was to be placed under a goblin’s spell? He stood up, his tea cup crashing out of his numb fingers and tried to leave the room. He was made to sit down forcibly and then he was *cleaned, cleaned* for Merlin’s sake of the tea stains off his robes. Maybe they believed in killing only clean people. The goblin stopped his terrified thoughts.

“Our apologies. Perhaps we have scared you. What I meant was the spell would protect you so that no one not Voldemort or your other master Dumbledore would be able to access it from your mind. What we will be revealing to you is a matter of such importance not only to us, but especially to you and your world.”

Snape felt a bit better. Almost at once he felt the invisible binds that had made him sit down by force had vanished. He nodded his head once and looked more alert.

The goblin from the table took out a pensieve and removed the cover that had been placed tightly to cover it. Runib took the pensieve carefully from the goblin and placed it on a small table to the right of Snape that Snape had not noticed before. The goblin flicked his fingers once.

The room turned dark and slowly a figure that was of Lily Evans Potter came up and looking straight at where Snape was sitting started speaking.

*Hello Severus, I pray to all the powers that be, to grant you good health, incredible powers and a long life.*

*I have requested Turdin, who is the head of Gringotts to call you only if my beloved baby is alive. Today is the twenty-ninth of April nearly a decade after James's and my death. I have prepared this memory on the twenty ninth of October 1981, when I am almost sure we and I mean James and I will not live to see the New Year on the First of November.*

*I know you have accepted the position of potions professor at Hogwarts and if eight years later finds you still there, then I have only one thing to say to you. **BEWARE OF Albus Dumbledore**. You may be shocked and surprised that I a Potter and a Griffindor is warning you of a man **who is the Light** for everyone in our world.*

*Though I am a muggleborn I have been blessed with formidable gifts. I have the aura sight Severus.*

Here Snape drew a sharp breath. Aura sight he thought with reverence. Merlin! What a gift to have. He was almost jealous of her for a second as he listened to her.

*I first discovered it when we were still in school and I saw an invisible Dumbledore so many times in so many places, including the girls' dorms. While that suggested only a perverted mind, nevertheless I was never able to trust him fully afterwards.*

*It was sometime later that I found Peter Pettigrew deep in conversation with Dumbledore. That shocked me on so many levels. Peter at the time was insipid, weak and a coward. What could he have in common with the leader of the Light; I was baffled and it took me many months before I came to know just what Peter would speak to Albus Dumbledore about.*

*I married James as you know and we had Harry soon after. It was after Harry's birth we came to know of the prophecy and then*

*James's parents were killed. Severus, I should have known at that time at least, but I did not as my belief that a man who killed Grindelwald for us could not go wrong. Potter castle wards demands you be keyed in personally by a Potter. Even I had to be keyed in by James or his father. Not even his mother could do that job.*

*At the time the elder Potters were killed, very few people had access to the castle. Now I am sure, it was Dumbledore and Peter who must have killed them. James fell into depression, and at the time when we so immersed in grief Dumbledore advised us to leave the safety of the castle and her impressive wards and move into Godric's Hollow.*

*I did not know at that time the hidden agenda of the so called leader of the light, whom I foolishly believed in, because of a phoenix that was his familiar. I had no one to trust and no one to confide in. It was at that time I remembered, your letter that was signed in blood and spoke of a vow to help only Harry. Dumbledore had not told me of such a vow and had you not written I would never have known.*

*I worked hard and put my suspicions into many diaries along with my gifts and the things I had worked out at the Order meetings that we attended as members of the Order of the Phoenix. I was, along with Moody in charge of additional warding the Order headquarters and I made use of that opportunity make some personal findings.*

*I used an ancient charm and placed what we call cameras in the muggle world, though here I placed what were decorative portraits without people in them that could see and hear everything that happened in that particular room.*

*Then I connected them to a common portrait at Godric's Hollow where I placed a portrait of mine with a small blood ritual, yes Severus, Dark magic, but I was desperate at the time and to be frank, I really did not care, so that I would be able to see even if there were invisible persons or persons under the invisibility cloak.*

*I found Dumbledore constantly in secretive conversations, I could not hear, with only two people, Peter Pettigrew and Arthur Weasley. Not Weasley's wife, not Moody or any body else.*

*I was very curious to know the topics of conversations between them and after pouring through texts I came up with another idea. I placed the same charm on vases in all the rooms and had it placed it in the center and connected the charm from the vases to the main portrait from where I would be able to access and process information.*

*I brought flower vases apparently to make headquarters nice and bright and I crept out one night and went to headquarters and affixed the required charms to the vases. I struck gold, though it was too late to do anything.*

*I was able to fix these charms far too late for me to take any counter action and the memory of what is to come happened on the twenty-sixth of October 1981.*

*It was a conversation between, Albus, Peter and Arthur Weasley. You will see it in a second, after which I will make my request of you if you are willing. If you are not I will ask you agree to be obliterated completely of all information you have received at this time.*

There was a pause and Severus felt faint at all he was hearing. Dumbledore as a killer, as an equal to Voldemort and Dumbledore as the destroyer of the Wizarding world was something a part of his mind struggled to accept, while the other part that always felt wary of Dumbledore smirked in triumph.

The memory continued though this time it was a room in the old Order headquarters. Severus watched his eyes almost popping out of his head. What a lady! What brilliance and to do it all alone and that too at a time like that! What a woman!

*Dumbledore was casting silencing charms all around and then looked at two people who were standing on either side of him, smiling at him. "Well, Peter is everything in place? No problems whatsoever?"*

*"No, Albus. Voldemort will attack Godric's Hollow on the night of Halloween just a few days later from now. Are you finished with your plans Arthur?"*

*"Of course, Pete. All Albus has to do is to cast a mild hating charm on the Dursleys and sweet talk Mrs. Figg to make her check up on Harry*

*and then we are all set. We can forget about Harry Potter till he comes to Hogwarts."*

*"Are the Potter vaults really as magnificent as I have heard?"*

*"I really have no idea. Ask me in sixteen years and I will tell you, why tell you, show you and you can help yourself as much as you can from it." laughed Albus. "But make sure Black goes to Azkaban for life. Otherwise he would take charge of Harry and it will be impossible for us to even touch him, let alone the vaults."*

*"Who knows I am the secret keeper, Albus apart from you two, Sirius, Lily and James? Once we kill James and Lily no one will believe it even if Sirius shouts it from the rooftops and Remus has already started distancing himself and will prove to be no problem," said Peter dismissively.*

*All the three of them laughed and then Peter said jovially, "You don't tell Molly when you are alone, loving her Arthur," he laughed.*

*"You must be mad, my friend. I love Molly and if she even had the slightest inkling, Merlin! She would kill me first and then ask questions later." Arthur shuddered and on that note all of them parted and the memory came to a close.*

*Snape shuddered as well. And James Potter had called him a friend to die for. The bloody wimp had killed him using his friendship.*

*The memory continued and now Lily came back with her green eyes shining with unshed tears.*

*"I hope you understand. It was with this memory I came to Gringotts and approached the goblins for help.*

*The Potters are an old family going back to the Founders', Severus. Albus was indeed correct when he said that the Potter vaults are magnificent. They truly are. There are five vaults in all, right at the bottom of Gringotts.*

*The first wizard in the family was Robert Potter a muggle born orphan who was the third student to attend the Hogwarts School of witchcraft*

*and wizardry. He ambled into the school days before they were to open for the first time and discovered about the wonderful world of magic. He was sorted into Slytherin and became a potions master par excellence.*

*Slytherin had been married but the marriage had turned sour and he had been living alone at the time the school was built. Robert Potter and Salazar Slytherin bonded as father and son, each deriving from the other the happiness they had been denied.*

*Slytherin made him his official heir and left to him, all his worldly wealth and also his spiritual magic, by a blood ritual that made Robert Potter a Slytherin. Robbie as he was known kept his name as Slytherin's estranged wife promised to create trouble if he took the name of Slytherin.*

*He married the daughter of Godric Griffindor, Marissa Griffindor the first ever student of the great school they built. From there the lines of the Potter family as we know today officially begin.*

*The artifacts and the wealth in these vaults constitute more than a quarter of the wealth of our world. You can imagine the terror that will unleash if Albus or Voldemort were to get hold of these assets.*

*The goblins will help you in any way possible. I have only one request to make of you. Please take care of my son. You have unlimited money, and if you can rescue Sirius, if he is still alive, that is, and seek out Remus, they will stand by you as well.*

*You can access Potter castle with the help of Harry and along with Siri and Remus no one will be able to find you there. Discover Harry's gifts. Train him well. **And then destroy Albus, Peter and Arthur Weasley along with Voldemort and his Death Eaters.** I have given you information, gathered together all the help I could and have placed it in front of you, Severus.*

*It is your call now. If you agree, then I have asked the goblins to take another oath from you, before you sign the papers making you the official guardian of my child and the protector of our world. Whatever you choose, Severus, thank you, for now a few days away from my*

*death, I have the solace of hope that your letter created in my breast. Thank you for that.*

The silence could be cut with a knife. Severus put his head in his hands. He did not lift it for some time. Then he slowly looked at the head goblin, what was his name? Ah, yes Turdin. "May I have some time to think on it?"

"Of course, we did not expect you to agree right away Mr. Snape. But you may not leave here without giving your answer. That we cannot allow."

Of course they wouldn't. Merlin! Potter had it all cut out. To fight against, Dumbledore and Voldemort meant he would be fighting against every one. What was the use of having more than a quarter of the wealth if you most likely would not be allowed to enjoy it?

Severus squared his shoulders and came to a decision. He could not sit down and let this pass, when a brilliant witch had put so much together in such a short time, to allow those murderers to get away with it was just not in his nature. The worst that could happen was he would be killed. He shrugged. So what? At least he would die doing something worth doing.

He looked straight at Turdin and sharply nodded once. He was ready to give his oath and sign taking over as Potter's guardian.

The next four hours went in a whirlwind of activity as Snape signed and signed donated vast amounts of blood for the blood ritual to make him Harry Potter's guardian and took his oath to stand by Harry Potter, and to never betray him, cheat him, harm him mentally or physically. Lily had thought of everything.

The goblins told him Harry's current address and also told him if they were to receive prior notice, they would be able to incapacitate Mrs. Figg for that time.

They also gave him a money pouch and a mail pouch for direct correspondence with Turdin himself at all times, and told him details about the Potter castle and handed over the eight diaries that Lily had compiled and with a complicated goblin ritual, bound it to him. They



told him, Harry would be able to read it automatically as he had already been bound to them by his mother.

Severus took the diaries, shrunk them and left Gringotts. He went to The Leaky Cauldron and had a very late lunch and then taking a room, went to sleep.

End of Chapter – 3

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## Chapter – 4

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Snape slept like the dead, waking up the next morning, bright and early. His mind kicked into overdrive as the thought of the responsibility he had sworn to accept jumped into his mind. What was that Lily had said? *The guardian of Harry Potter and the protector of our world*. He truly was that, he thought as he mechanically went through his morning ablutions.

He ordered for tea and breakfast in his room, thinking of all that happened once he had accepted Lily's request. The information the vaults contained not to mention, the valuable books and artifacts. He drooled as he thought of them and the kind of knowledge he would be able to access to.

But he would not abuse the powers he had been given yesterday, he vowed to himself. Too many people had done it to the Potters, too many people had tried to run their lives for them and too much had been sacrificed by them just because they were Potters.

No, wait! They were not Potters, they were Slytherins! What a joke! He was bemused and was totally unable to fit James Potter as a Slytherin. That was his ultimate punishment he thought, as memories of how much he had suffered at the hands of the four friends, of which one had turned around to kill one friend and place the other in prison.

He ate slowly his mind needing the time to familiarize with the startling, shocking and totally unexpected information that had been bombarded at it. When he walked into Gringotts, never in his widest dreams, had he imagined he would be privy to something like this.

Severus took a deep breath. His life from that moment onwards had taken a new turn, had been filled with a new purpose. He now had a way to use the life he had often thought of as useless to do an enormous amount of good to his world. And by Merlin's staff, do it he will or die trying in the process.

He was filled with a new energy, a new hope and a feeling he was born again. He smiled and finishing his breakfast went to work. He placed wards all over the room, including the mirror and made sure there were no vases in the middle and a portrait of a beautiful landscape that hung on the wall was covered.

He had learnt many things yesterday and one of the first lessons was the fact that you could never be too careful, even if you were paranoid.

He then carefully, reverentially took out the diaries that were indicative not only of the brilliance of Lily Potter but also her hard work. He also took out the money pouch that was keyed in directly to the main vaults. He could not enter the vaults alone for the first time without Harry, but he could access money from it due to a complicated ritual that the goblins had performed on the advice of Lily Potter who had already set the ground work for it.

How had she convinced James, he wondered? It was he who had to affix his signature to all the relevant documents. Well Lily had done a brilliant job. He now had access to more money than he would ever need, not that he would touch it for himself, mind you.

The goblins had told him to treat it as his own as when he signed the papers, as he had not only become guardian to Harry Potter but had also bonded by blood. She had effectively made him a Potter or was it a Slytherin, he wondered?

Well he would use it and put the unlimited financial resources to good use. He was a very simple man of modest tastes and had no big aspirations or secret fantasies for himself. But he did want to do big research on potions and the dark arts. He could use the money that he had not had available for all this time, for research, once he had Harry's permission of course.

He scanned the diaries just looking through them, but for him to make any sense out of it he had to read and re-read them carefully, he realized.

He shrunk all of them back except the last one that had many empty pages, he assumed was for his own findings and conjuring a dicta quill started dictating to it.

*What to do next?*

*First read the diaries and understand it fully.*

*Find out about Peter and Arthur Weasley and see if you can get ant dirt on them. Contact Gringotts for the monetary aspects and also ask them to help for anything they could get on Weasley that could be held over his head and make him compliant.*

*What is Fawkes? Is Fawkes really a Phoenix? If so then is the rule that phoenixes are creatures of the Light totally wrong? Find out.*

*Rescue Black from Azkaban, even though impossible and dig out Lupin and get them to work together with him.*

*Find out about the wards around Harry Potter's aunt's house and also if there are spells on Harry to prevent him from accessing his magic and the type of hating charms that Dumbledore supposedly cast on Harry's relatives --- Gringotts can help with the wards on the house.*

*Figg, her role and the extent to which she is involved. From the memory it seems unlikely but never hurts to check. --- Gringotts can help for this as well.*

*Figure out course of action for Harry.*

Snape after careful thought came up with the above and getting up; he shrunk the last book before he banished the wards. He looked once to make sure he had not left anything behind and then went down, settled his bill with old Tom and strode back to Gringotts.

This time he knew where to go. He went directly to a small room at the far end that had 'OVERDRAFTS' written on the door. He opened the door and stepped inside and greeted a goblin who was sitting there. He then stepped on a small square on the floor and allowed the magic to wash over him and identify him.

A minute later a door appeared on the opposite side and Snape stepped through it, into a lift and went right down to the offices of Turdin.

"Mr. Snape, please come in. what can I do for you?" Turdin was getting up and holding out his hand to Snape. Though Snape had seen a friendly side of the goblins yesterday, this cordiality still unnerved him a little.

"Good Morning Mr. Turdin. I have made a list of things I need to do before I can approach Harry. I need your help, opinion and advice on some of those issues."

Turdin nodded in approval, "Of course Mr. Snape. As we told you yesterday, it is not only the fact that more than a quarter of the total wealth is here in the name of the Potters that has made us give this level of cooperation to Mrs. Potter's requests to aid her son and by extension you, who are helping the young Mr. Potter, but the relations we have enjoyed for over a thousand years with that family.

"They have grown with us and have always treated us with respect and have stood by our side in important matters, fighting for our rights against the Ministry, using their influence to aid us greatly. We are honoured to help and will do anything to save the line of the Potters as well as their wealth."

Snape smiled at him, thankful that he had powerful allies that he would need from day one, in order to do what he had already started thinking of as his solemn duty.

"Well, the first and the most important thing that disturbs me is Fawkes. Lily was fooled for a long time by the presence of a phoenix called Fawkes that is constantly with Dumbledore. Is it a myth that phoenixes are creatures of the Light and if they are, then they really cannot bond with a person like the Headmaster, can they? If that is so, then what exactly is Fawkes?"

Turdin frowned as he collected his thoughts, "Phoenixes are definitely birds of the Light. They cannot in any way associate themselves with any type of darkness. We had no answers when we were asked almost the same question by Mrs. Potter when she came here last.

They cannot bear to be with a man of Dark intent, remember, Mr. Snape, I mean dark intent and not the dark arts.

“After the passing away of Mrs. Potter, however, that particular question continued to nag me, and so I made it my priority to find as you have suspected now, if that bird is really a phoenix or a common bird placed under glamour charms as a phoenix.

“Unfortunately, that bird is very much a phoenix. I personally tested it myself and even cast a killing curse at it. It was reborn from the ashes just a few minutes later. And you know not even magic can bring the dead back to life again and I can assure you I did not use Necromancy.

“That is one thing I have not been able to solve in all these years. To say it is worrying is mild, Mr. Snape. How can a wizard even someone as powerful as Dumbledore be able to change the apparent behavioral habits of such great species like the phoenixes?”

It was Snape who was frowning now. “Then is there any chance she might have been mistaken about Dumbledore. Remember at that time people suspected every one and every thing and most of the time they had good reason to do so.” He frowned even deeper. “Then there is that memory. Even I can see it has not been tampered with.”

“Oh, you may be rest assured it is not a faulty memory, Mr. Snape. After we saw it we demanded answers under veritaserum, after we administered potions to clean her entire body with strong cleansing potions so that she could not even think of lying.

“Even though she is a member of the most powerful family behind the scenes, she was accusing a man whose stature had grown to such an extent it would cause chaos in a world that was already crumbling down, and she was alone. It was her husband who is the Potter and he had not accompanied her.

“So initially we were in doubt and only humored her because of her name, but soon we realized the truth in her statements and appreciated her desperation. But she came too late, and the final memory that really incriminates Dumbledore, Peter and Weasley

came to us just a few days before the New Year and we could do nothing.”

“Why?” asked Snape. It was a question that baffled him. Why didn’t Lily do anything with the information and the doubts that she had had? Maybe initially she had doubts because she really had no proof apart from seeing Dumbledore and Pettigrew talking together and seeing Dumbledore in the girls’ dorms.

But after seeing Dumbledore, Peter and Weasley together in the Order headquarters and then even finding out their own agenda that involved killing Potter and Lily and controlling Harry till he came of age to take over the Potter vaults, why, oh why did not Lily do something?

“Mr. Snape while, she did everything for an eventuality that both her husband and her would be killed, remember initially, she also thought Harry would be killed as well, but after she came into possession of this evidence she did come running to us to somehow save all three of them.

“However all we could do was to hide them, provided Mr. Potter would leave everything and come without rushing off in anger and then the question was for how long?

“We had no clue what preparations Dumbledore had made and for how long could they hide without being discovered and the most alarming thing was the amount of control he seemed to have over James Potter, who at the time was a very disturbed man and we had to think about the reactions of Mr. Potter if he came to know the extent to which he had been betrayed by Peter and Dumbledore as they had been responsible for his parents deaths as well.

“And if they hid and if Dumbledore managed to capture James Potter and was able to manipulate him somehow, the vaults could already fall into his control right then and then as they would no longer need the young Harry Potter, they might have killed him as well.

“Choosing to die and let her child live rather than take her chances and let all of them be killed and the immense wealth falling into the hands of her husband’s parents’ and soon to be their murderers’ as

well was the decision Mrs. Potter took in the very short time she had, for we had so much work to do after she came to a decision one way or the other, I am afraid she practically had to choose blind folded.”

Snape was silent for a while. Lily chose to die so that her son could live. His resolve only strengthened. What Turdin said had a lot of truth in it. James Potter was impetuous and at the time all of them were barely twenty, where anger might have overruled caution and revenge would have overruled careful planning.

Potter would have madly rushed after Dumbledore, who would have probably killed him with a smile. He suppressed a shudder and felt a chill go down through him as he thought of what was hiding beneath such a benign exterior.

“Mr. Turdin if I had not accepted, what would you have done? Not that you need to answer but,” Snape was very curious about this.

“We would have pleaded with you Mr. Snape. And if that had failed, we would have taken him away on his eleventh birthday as per your laws, where a goblin can assume guardianship of a wizard from his eleventh birthday, if his parents so agree. And I have the signatures of Mr. and Mrs. Potter to that effect with me.”

“I am glad I can do my little bit to save our world from a smiling maniac who kills for pleasure and money. I wonder how he killed Grindelwald?” asked Snape softly, still overwhelmed, he had been chosen by this girl for deliverance.

“Like the mystery of Fawkes, that is also unexplained. We have very few answers and far too many questions where Dumbledore is concerned.” Shrugged Turdin.

Snape decided to leave the question of Fawkes for the time being. He turned to other matters. “Can you help me with assessing the wards on Harry’s home?”

Turdin seemed glad he could answer something in the affirmative. “We have already done that Mr. Snape. There are no wards except general wards that can be pulled down in a minute. All the important wards are on the boy. There are magic suppressing wards, tracking



charms and a submissive charm and a ward to register magic within the house.”

“So the moment I take the boy he would know?” asked Snape.

“Oh, most definitely.” Turdin answered. Snape looked thoughtful at this. Well he could deal with it. That seemed the easiest task to perform successfully, till now.

“Arthur Weasley and Peter Pettigrew. Would it be possible for you to dig up something on them, Arthur especially as he seemed to have a soft spot for his wife and children and we may be able to use any dirt we can, when the time comes.”

Turdin nodded in approval. Snape was a good choice. “Yes Mr. Snape, we will start on it right away, and we will also do the same with Dumbledore. Who knows, we may find a loophole that we could breach.”

Snape thanked him and Turdin pressed Snape to seek him out whenever he had the need to do so. On that note Snape left Gringotts.

It was almost lunch time and he went inside The Leaky Cauldron and had a full lunch, before deciding to leave for Hogwarts.

Before he apparated, he wrote a letter to Lupin, asking him meets him the next week end with regard to an adjustment he had made in the wolfsbane potion and would Lupin be interested?

He asked for a reply, only if Lupin was not coming as otherwise he would be there at the Three Broomsticks.

Snape went back to Hogwarts with his Occlumency shields at maximum. But there was no need to worry, as Albus, smilingly enquired about his trip.

Snape honestly said he had wanted to borrow some money for experimental potions and he had been in and out of Gringotts the last day and a half.

Albus sent him away wishing him all the very best in his experiments.

Snape did not waste a minute. He turned to leave, when he was struck with a brilliant idea. "Sir if I may request you of a small thing?"

"Go on Severus. What may I do for you?"

"May I have some tears, phoenix ashes and feathers for my experiments? If it is not much of a problem, Sir? These ingredients are costly," he trailed off blushing valiantly, as if ashamed of showing his relative poverty.

Albus smiled at his shame, "Severus, if Fawkes agrees, I have no problems." And turned to Fawkes and looked at him enquiringly.

Fawkes looked at him for a long moment as if assessing him, then with a trill flew to Snape's shoulder. Snape almost jumped in joy.

He blushed again at Albus valiantly, made Albus smile again, before sending him away.

Snape turned at once and left, smiling all the way to his beloved dungeons.

There he turned to Fawkes. He made a complicated swish of his wand and found Fawkes did not change, though he trilled angrily and flew towards Snape in great anger, sat on his head and FLASH!

Snape was left standing there while Fawkes had gone to the other end of the room and was trilling softly in great anger.

Snape hurriedly cast the 'aguamenti charm and put out the flame that had singed off most of his hair. Snape was happy.

Snape smiled and apologized to the ruffled bird, who huffed a bit before calming down.

He had used a very dark spell. The purpose had been two fold. One was to reveal if it was something other than a phoenix. The other was to see how the bird would react to such a dark spell.

Though Turdin had told him that he had already checked Fawkes, Snape had to make sure as Fawkes would be here all the time as far as he knew it.

Now it seemed the bird was a phoenix. Snape was totally taken aback. He went to the bird murmuring, "I am really, truly sorry Fawkes. I just thought you were something else. You are a bird of the Light aren't you? You really wouldn't go to anyone who is dark, would you? Be careful Fawkes. Not everyone and not everything are as they seem."

He stroked the bird that seemed to be listening intently to him. Suddenly another idea seized him. "Fawkes, may I perform another spell on you?" he asked softly.

Fawkes gave an indignant squawk and flew away from there to another part of the room, glaring at Snape.

"No, no, no." he said, walking towards the bird. "You misunderstand me. Not a dark spell, Fawkes, but a spell to see, if anyone has put compulsion charms or any other binding spells on you by force. But only if you agree."

It did not occur to Snape that he was normally conversing with a bird of all things. Even stranger was the fact, that Fawkes was listening to him and answering him as well. The last two days had been so extraordinary he never gave another thought to the fact he was conversing with a bird with which he had no contact till now.

The problem of Fawkes being with the Headmaster was so wrong, his mind refused to accept any reason. It was like Voldemort having one as his familiar. It never could be.

Now Fawkes was looking at Snape intently as if trying to read him. After about five minutes of simply staring at him, Fawkes gave a soft trill and gave a small nod.

Snape was thrilled. He lifted his wand and cast a revealer for any type of compulsion and binding spells cast on the phoenix. It came in the negative.

He frowned. He had been so sure Fawkes was captured by a spell and bound by another; he did not know what to do.

He scratched his singed head and absently rubbed it. He came away with a huge lock of his greasy hair. He gave a squawk as loudly as Fawkes had given before and rushed to the mirror.

He yelled out in horror.

He ran to his cupboard to remove the special hair growing potion and applied it on liberally and gave a relieved sigh as he felt his hair healing and growing. He checked in the mirror again and satisfied with what he saw, came to Fawkes again.

“You are really formidable, you know. Would you please give me some of your precious tears, ashes and feathers before *he* thinks otherwise?”

The phoenix readily gave Snape everything he wanted and still stayed back watching Snape all the while.

“Thanks, Fawkes. You had better leave. The Headmaster will come searching for you otherwise. I am really sorry for causing you so much of pain with the dark curse. Forgive me?”

Fawkes responded to the genuine apology softly spoken by Snape with an equally soft trill that warmed Snape’s heart. He then disappeared in a flash of flame.

Snape carefully stored all that Fawkes had given him and went into his private quarters and warded and re warded the room. He did not notice a pair of eyes looking deeply at him as he did so the impressive wards not stopping them.

He removed the shrunken diaries and enlarged them. The pair of eyes could read perfectly what was written on the cover and the eyes widened.

***The personal diaries of Lily Evans Potter***

Snape opened the last diary where he had made the short notes in the morning. The eyes read everything with a gasp that Snape did not hear.

Snape still unaware, wrote in the diary that Fawkes was definitely a phoenix and none of it fit in. The eyes read that and disappeared.

End of Chapter – 4

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## Chapter – 5

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After Snape had written down the note, he closed the book and removed the first diary and started reading. He read late into the night, fascinated by the thinking and intelligence and the effort of Lily Evans Potter.

The next morning, he strode briskly to the Great Hall, scowling at every one and managing to take away fifteen points from Gryffindor, before he reached his place at the breakfast table.

He sat down, satisfied at the piece of good work he had done in the morning and had his breakfast completely at peace with himself and went to his classes, intending to terrorize the students and try and take away more points from Gryffindor if he could.

He also decided to watch the other Professors and try to find out their opinions and the extent to which they were loyal to Dumbledore. He also wanted to know if they would be swayed to Harry's side. For that was what it was going to come down to. The three players in whose hands the Wizarding world was going to be tossed about.

The rest of the week passed in blessed monotony. Snape prepared the wolfsbane and added minor changes he knew would not render much effect but would not harm the drinker either.

Armed with the wolfsbane in his hand and with hope burning in his heart and prepared to bury forever the enmity and dislike for the sake of a larger vision, Snape walked briskly to the Three Broomsticks, to find Remus Lupin sitting there, sipping a glass of water.

He looked about fifty, tired and shabby. Snape against his will felt something, that was close to feeling compassion, for a man who was treated like a beast, an outcast because of an incident he was not able to control, rise in his chest. His robes were patched up in so many places it was pathetic. And he was sipping water not being able to afford anything else. He was thin to the point of emaciation.

Snape walked up to him and sat down opposite him, placing a vial of the wolfsbane potion in front of him. Remus looked up and seeing Snape, smiled at him, seemingly glad to see an old classmate, even though they had not been friends.

Close up Snape was internally horrified at what Remus had become, though on his face he kept the patented sneer on.

“Hello, Severus, how are you keeping? It has been a long time, hasn’t it? I was very pleased to receive a letter from you and thank you for wanting to try to improve the wolfsbane.” He said softly.

Polite as ever. It would probably kill him, Snape decided if the poverty did not do him in before.

He could not sneer at Lupin at that moment to save his life. He had thought life had been cruel to him. Life had already destroyed Lupin. Well if Lupin was on the side of the right, then, just as for him, life was giving him another chance, knocking on his door for a golden opportunity to do something truly worth your while and to live, truly live at the same time.

“I am fine, though it looks like I cannot say the same about you.” He answered softly. Remus flushed slightly.

“Well things are a bit tough now. You see, I am in between jobs.” He smiled.

Snape came to a decision. He asked Lupin to follow him and took him outside and walked out of the small village into the wilderness that lay beyond. He chose a place that was sheltered, but at the same time was placed in a way he could watch all around and check on any one who would approach them, from a far, while they were sufficiently hidden.

At first Lupin obediently followed him, but when they left Hogsmeade, he started frowning; looking at Snape all the while he was being led to a secluded spot.

The eyes that had been watching Snape all through the week now followed Snape all the way to Hogsmeade were also with both of

them and were watching intently to the happenings between the two totally different men.

Lupin had his wand out by the time Snape stopped. Snape seemed supremely unconcerned. Snape took out his own wand and not acknowledging Lupin's tense and alert stance, started placing complicated wards, some of which he knew already and some he had learned from the diaries.

Lupin had not changes his stance, but now he was frowning thoughtfully, his brain now working furiously. He had been the logic of the four friends and his extreme analytical thinking had saved them so many times.

He had accepted with resignation that he would be thought of as the spy, even though in reality he would rather die a thousand deaths than to betray the first and the only friends he had, but his status as a werewolf did not allow for that level of trust in him.

He had been heartbroken when he had been suspected and all these years he had never got over it. He had come running to see Snape just because he was a reminder of the days gone by, when he lived as an accepted member of the society, probably the happiest days of his life.

Today life was all about living day by day; every day was a struggle, struggle to live, struggle to fill his stomach at least a little with food. He was living on memories mostly, now-a- days.

Snape finished warding, impressive wards Lupin thought. Why, was the burning question that was beating itself into his head?

Snape then turned to Lupin. The eyes were also watching carefully and intently.

"I was given this information nine years after I gave my oath to protect Harry Potter in a desperate attempt to get out of the evil maniac's influence. I am going to give you that information hardly a week after I received it. You hear me out fully, if you will want to join hands with me, to work with me, fine.



“Otherwise, I have placed oblivation wards here around us. When you walk out all that we discussed here will be erased from your mind. I wish for you to at the least hear me out. Please.” Snape finished softly.

Lupin was numb with shock. What would Snape of all people want to discuss with him, for heaven’s sake. It must be really important for him to place these wards and he had never even heard of oblivation wards, for Merlin’s sake.

Still in shock, he nodded. Then Snape and Lupin sat on the ground and Snape started. He spoke continuously for half an hour without any interruptions from Lupin, except for the darkening of his eyes and the tightening of his lips.

“Severus I am forever indebted to you for asking me to help you, even if it were on the advice of Lily. I will give you any oath you want of me on my life, soul and magic and pledge to you to help Harry save his life and inheritance and destroy Wormtail, Weasley, Dumbledore and Voldemort.”

“Wormtail? Who is that?”

“That is the rat Peter is. All the three of them became animagus. James was a stag and we called him Prongs, Sirius was a Grim and we called him Padfoot and Wormtail is the rat that is Peter’s animagus form. He is a rat in more ways than one and when we rescue Sirius both of us will toss for who will get him. I will start praying right now.”

Severus was comforted by the emotion and the will to help in Lupin’s voice. He took the specified oath that he had given to the goblins from Lupin and then both of them discussed about rescuing Sirius from Azkaban.

“How to go about it is baffling me, I don’t know how to rescue someone from that dreaded place,” said Snape, marveling internally at the fact he was talking and not snarling, hexing or dropping pearls of sarcasm on the people he had hated the most for seven continuous years.

“All I hope is he is sane. He has already spent nine years in that lousy place.” Agreed a worried Lupin who had to rethink all the bad thoughts he had harbored towards Sirius and now think those very thoughts of Peter. It was a huge mental shift for the werewolf.

The pair of eyes that had followed them listened intently to all that was being said there within the wards that did not seem to stop those eyes or warn the other two who were conversing in serious tones.

Lupin and Snape left together for Gringotts to introduce Lupin to the goblins. The eyes blinked once and vanished.

Snape returned just an hour later having sent Lupin on his way. They had almost come to blows when Snape had given some money to take care of his expenses. Snape had given from his own savings and had had to literally hex Lupin to make him accept it.

Lupin finally, reluctantly took the money though only after Snape had told him quite sharply he must be in good health for him to be of any use to Harry. That was the key and Remus took the money from Snape, money that would allow him to eat three square meals a day for the next so many days.

The next week passed by and both Snape and Lupin were now immersed in studies; Snape with the diaries and Lupin with all the books he could find in the General Library in Diagon Alley. He paid for the membership with the money Snape had given him and went to work.

They met again on Sunday with Snape handing over the wolfsbane and some more money, talked mainly about Sirius and Harry for some time and not really able to come to any conclusion, went back to their respective place of residence.

Snape wanted to rescue Sirius before the summer vacation as he wanted Harry to be out of the Dursley household when Hogwarts closed for the summer. That would give Snape two solid months with Harry.

He felt he would need that time to bond with Harry, tell him everything and then leave for Hogwarts. They would then be able to take it from there.

The question was the rescue of Sirius. Snape felt he had reached a brick wall and he did not know how to cross this barrier. The goblins had unfortunately been unable to help him in this matter and Lupin was getting more and more agitated as he thought of Sirius in Azkaban going quietly insane for something he was innocent of.

The month of May had given way to June and still Snape and Lupin had no answers. Even if they gate crashed Azkaban how would they deal with the dozens of dementors and the aurors together? All their thinking only resulted in frustration that sometimes made them snap at each other and sometimes even hex the other.

The pair of eyes followed them everywhere, listening and watching.

The days went by and Snape finished the fourth reading of the diaries and Lupin his first hearing of them. Lupin could not read them so he had to be content with only hearing them.

School was also coming to a close and Snape was feeling more and more angry and frustrated as he thought of their helpless situation. He could not shrug off the fact that Sirius was in Azkaban and move on as he felt he was letting down Lily's memory and falling down in his assumed duty.

But there seemed nothing he could do. Nothing, no plan seemed foolproof against dementor and aurors for two slightly above average wizards.

On the last day he received a letter from an anonymous person.

He fell down in a dead faint in the Great Hall.

He was leaving the Great Hall after breakfast and all the students were already leaving for the station to catch the Hogwarts express. There were not many owls on that day in the Great Hall as all of them were leaving for their homes.

A nondescript brown owl flew in as Snape was leaving and held out its leg for a letter. Snape who was already in a bad mood of sorts as one part of his brain seemed to be constantly thinking of Azkaban and failing every day to find a solution, impatiently untied the letter that was actually a small note.

*Mr. Snape,*

*If you do not wish for any one to know of your secret, the one that you have been speaking with Mr. Lupin and the matter in the diaries of the esteemed and late Mrs. Lily Potter, please come along with Mr. Lupin at three 'o' clock today. 'Where', is an unspecified location. How will you come there? Hold on to this letter, it will act as a portkey at the appointed time along with Mr. Lupin. Do not fail.*

The letter was unsigned. Snape read it and fainted. Albus came running to him and lifted him in concern. He lifted the letter read it and smiled.

He enervated Snape and asked him the matter. The fear on Snape was amazing to watch. Albus shook him a little and Snape just moved away, muttering something like "How did it, how did it," over and over again.

Albus felt he must do something before his potions master lost his sanity fully.

He patted Snape on the back and said with a smile, "Severus there is no need to worry. Someone has released a prank boggart on you. That is the fear you are feeling. But why are you looking at me and muttering with fear. Am I your worst fear?"

Snape was still babbling in fear. He did not realize just how all this could have happened. He had been so careful; he glanced at the Headmaster and saw he was smiling. That put Snape into a trance. Albus smiling was never a good sign.

Albus was becoming genuinely worried. Snape seemed to be going into a panic. He shook Snape a little harder than before and getting the man's attention, repeated what he had seen in the letter.

Snape roused himself from the trance he had fallen into and tried to smile at the Headmaster, and failed miserably. He then walked shakily to his rooms in the dungeons and practically fell into his chair.

How could someone know about his meetings with Lupin let alone the conversations he had had with him. Then the diaries had also been mentioned. Even Lupin could not see the diaries as they were. He had had to read it for him. The diaries, otherwise at all other times had been in a secure pouch given by the goblins specially to keep them safe.

Lily had also placed blood wards on them so that they could not be read by any other than Harry and himself, apart from her. Snape almost lost it at that point. He wondered furiously whether that person was an ally of the Headmaster or if it was the headmaster himself, who was playing a game with him, by pretending not to know anything.

If it was not the Headmaster and Snape slowly thinking about it, felt it could not be, as Albus Dumbledore would not have let him live for so long, then who was it? How did they get around the wards and how could they read the diaries that even Lupin could not?

The sender had also placed a very advanced charm, Snape had no idea whatsoever, about that, which made anyone other than the person to whom it was intended for would see it as a boggart prank? That meant the sender also knew the panic it would send him into. Who was it?

Well he had no choice, he had to go and see if he could salvage something. He stood up on unsteady feet and went to his room to send two secure messages, one to Lupin and the other to Turdin.

He copied a transcript of the letter to both of them and asked Lupin to meet him at Gringotts in an hour so that they may be prepared to meet the anonymous person who had them in his the palm of his hand.

He then packed all of his things and went to the Head master's office to apologize and tell him he would like to leave early and could he come back later to finish his leftover correction and other work.

Albus was very relieved to see that Snape looked far better and enquiring after him solicitously he gave his express permission for Snape to leave early and also advised him to take a holiday.

Snape agreed fervently and leaving the office walked to the gates and apparated to Gringotts, only to be met with a frantic Lupin, who looked as he felt.

Both of them almost ran inside and went to the small overdrafts room to take the lift to see Turdin. They found a war like atmosphere there with as many as twenty guards all milling around, as Turdin was talking to all of them sternly in their language and all of them were listening intently.

As soon as he saw them, he broke off and gesturing to follow them, went inside and asked for details. Snape silently handed out the letter and looked guilty and ashamed.

"I am so sorry. How this could have happened I do not know."

Turdin looked at his cringing shame and his shock that such a thing could have happened and smiled.

"I do not blame you Mr. Snape. Have you forgotten the oath you gave? If it was you who had betrayed then be rest assured you will not be standing here wanting to defuse the situation. You would have been dead."

Snape blinked. He shook his head vigorously. "No, I am not worried about that. I am worried about Harry Potter. If it is indeed the Headmaster, then he may try and cart Harry away. That was and is the cause of all panic."

"Well you did the best thing and immediately informed me, Mr. Snape. And I have already sent twenty guards, my best men to Harry's residence. If anyone, let it be the Minister, the Headmaster or anyone even comes about a hundred feet from the house, I have given my strict instructions for them to abduct young Harry from there and bring him here."

Snape felt a bit better. "We will keep up the appointment and see that it is who could break my wards, and I must have placed about fifteen of them every blessed time I spoke to Lupin." Snape was understandably agitated.

Turdin handed over a galleon to both of them. "If there is any problem, then all you have to say the words 'Gringotts overdrafts' and these will bring you here."

Snape and Lupin had lunch with the goblins, growing tenser by the minute. Soon it was approaching three 'o' clock. Both Snape and Lupin got hold of the letter and sharp at three, both of them left the offices of Turdin.

They were whisked away by the mysterious letter and when they landed, they found themselves in a wood that looked beautiful. The woods looked deep and very big. There were old, old oak, holly, elm, birch and cherry trees all around them and the atmosphere was calm, peaceful and totally quiet.

It was the silence of nature that was in itself healing and bestowing the absolute peace on anyone who would care to come to them and relax in their midst.

Snape and Lupin felt it as well as they breathed in the pure air and listened to the whispering of the leaves in the gentle breeze. As they turned here and there, a woman's voice suddenly came from nowhere.

Snape and Lupin standing back to back with their wands raised in a state of orange alert, looked around carefully, but for the lives of them could not discern the direction from where the voice came and whose it was.

The voice was soothing, charming and intoxicating. It was soft and very firm at the same time. It was gentle and gave them their message in no uncertain terms.

*Severus and Remus, I am glad to make your acquaintance in person today. Though I have seen you before, I had not, the pleasure of*

*speaking to you, before today. I, too am against Albus Dumbledore for reasons too many to enumerate.*

*My husband and I have been deceived by him in the worst way possible. But we were alone until now and were helpless to do anything against a man who is thought of the next Merlin by the Wizarding world at large.*

*All of them could not be more wrong. Albus Dumbledore is a man who is ruthless, dangerous and a killer to say the least about him. We have been assured of your sincerity of standing against him by scrutinizing your actions and I am happy to tell you we will extend any help we can towards your cause.*

*To prove to you that we are indeed against Albus and we wish you to believe us so that we may work together we have taken the liberty of rescuing Sirius Black from the prison of Azkaban.*

*We have left a golem that will die exactly two weeks from today and so please tell him to prepare his will least the Black properties and inheritances, which I am given to understand are immense should fall in the hands of the next of kin, who I presume would be the Lestranges and that will be equivalent to giving it to Voldemort himself.*

*Albus Dumbledore is a fraud, a cheat and a murderer. He killed in cold blood the elder Potters who were very good friends of ours. We were one of the few people who knew about the lineage of the Potters and have been privileged to have visited the hallowed vaults.*

*They are truly magnificent and the terror that Albus can leash if he gets in control of those vaults cannot be said in mere words. You children have taken the daunting task of confronting a man who though evil inside has cultivated the image of such goodness outside, that to oppose him would result in retribution, not from him, but from the people who would not just disbelieve you but also punish you.*

*Harry Potter has an even bigger task as he also has the prophecy to fulfill, take care of Albus and also put our world on the right track. When you retrieve him, kindly check him for any spell that might have been placed on him to suppress his special gifts.*



*Albus would not have used simple spells that can be detected in a common manner. We have also placed a list of spells that are actually blood spells, that can never be removed unless the caster removes them or the person on whom it is cast removes them.*

*To do this you will need Harry's blood and you will need to perform a ritual, and then cast the spells. The ritual is also there along with the list of spells. Make sure you cast all the spells and you will find the gifts he can access, those that have been suppressed, starting from access to his full magical core and the person who placed those spells on him.*

*You may step inside this wood and walk for about a minute and you will reach Sirius Black and the parchment. Remember, Black has only two weeks to set his affairs in order. We have given him nourishing potions and also healed him to the best of our ability. You may do the rest.*

The warm, honeyed and magical voice stopped speaking and Snape and Remus felt a deep sense of loss when it stopped speaking.

They looked at each other, but the fact Sirius might be there a minute's walk away was a temptation too much to ignore. To add to the temptation was the so called spells that Snape and Lupin had never heard of. They must be very ancient if such magic suppressing spells were actually there.

Both of them came to a conclusion at the same time. They nodded once at each other, took the galleons, the goblins had given them in their left hand and their wands ready to fire in a second, walked into the lovely, dark, deep and green woods.

End of Chapter – 5

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## Chapter – 6

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Snape and Lupin, their wands held in their hands and their galleons ready to take them away to safety, walked in cautiously. The woods were really lovely and there was the gentle summer breeze that was brushing past them as it danced along. Trees, tall, broad and huge trees more than hundreds of years old stood silently, their leaves turning this way and that, in the breeze, watching them along with the beautiful voice.

They would have walked inside for about exactly a minute when they saw Sirius leaning against the trunk of an old oak tree, with a parchment pinned to his chest. He appeared to be sleeping deeply.

Remus gave a soft cry and was rushing off to hold and hug Sirius, when Snape's hand stopped him. Remus turned to glare at Snape, but Snape shook his head patiently.

"Wait, Lupin, let us check he is really Black." Saying so he pointed his wand at Sirius and started casting many identity and revealing spells. There was no indication of any fraud and then he nodded to Lupin.

Remus ran to Sirius and hugged him and enervated him gently. Sirius woke up completely bewildered and totally lost for a few minutes and then he recognized Remus.

"My God! Moony why did they catch you? Wait let me shout for the aurors and tell them," he trailed off noticing for the first time where he was.

Remus was still holding him, his eyes shining unnaturally brightly, and he whispered, "You, my friend are free. Totally free."

"Why, Moony, How? Have they caught Wormtail? OH! Moony, I was not the secret keeper but him, I would never ever betray them and I thought it was you and Merlin, I am sorry and what happened and how did I get here and who pulled me out," he began loudly before he was hushed by Remus by simple method of placing his hand over Sirius's agitated mouth, which was still mumbling incoherently.

Snape stepped out revealing himself for the first time. He was understandably tense. Lupin was a cake walk compared to this man. It was Black who would be so difficult to handle, so difficult to convince.

It was with him and James Potter that his enmity ran high, both of them who had made him weep in anger and humiliation so many times, he had lost count. But he had to bridge the gap if they were to work together. The bridge had to be built afresh if they were to do anything constructive.

“YOU!! What are you doing here? Moony have you joined with him and have you changed?” Sirius was once again cut off, though not by a gentle hand on his mouth, but by a sharp string of words from Snape.

“Shut up, Black! You really think I would rescue you of all people from Azkaban only to kill you all over again. Why should I when the dementors are doing such a fantastic job and making you cry everyday?”

“Well, then why have you?” Sirius’s tone was accusatory and suspicious.

“Because you ass, I am here with Lupin a task totally different. Wait.” And Snape started warding adding eight more wards making a total of over twenty-three wards in all. Sirius looked increasingly confused and he kept glancing at Lupin who smiled at him, whispering to him, telling him it would all be just fine.

The voice was amused at the display of additional wards and watched with care as Snape and Lupin tried to convince a confused Sirius.

Once again Snape started speaking, this time with an added action. He lifted his wand and spoke clearly. The voice was impressed at the cleverness of Snape as that one action would convince Sirius more than all the words.

“I swear on my magic all I am going to reveal now to Sirius Black, is the absolute truth. If I speak a falsehood may I fall down dead. So

mote it be.” Snape watched the golden spire of magic surround him as the oath came into effect.

He started with the half Prophecy he heard, the way he had come running back to Albus and the oath he had given to protect Harry as a desperate measure to save his skin, the letter he had written Lily, without receiving a reply for almost nine years and then the letter from Gringotts and seeing Lily’s memory in the pensieve, giving his own oath to the goblins as per Lily’s request, creating the blood bond with Harry using Harry’s blood that Lily had kept safely, contacting Lupin, the letter he had received in the morning and the events that had taken place since that morning, finishing with the ‘talk’ they had received from the voice and finding him there.

As Snape was still alive and kicking Sirius had no recourse except to believe him. Feelings of immense sadness swept over him as he realized how much James’s and his own immaturity had cost all of them.

If only they had grown up a bit, Lily would have taken courage to tell them all she knew and so much that happened could have been changed.

He felt bitter that it was Snape who now had a blood bond with his Godson. But then again, who would have thought he would survive Azkaban and still be so coherent? It must have been the healing of the mysterious persons.

He was devastated that Lily had had no one to run to and she had had to rely on Snape and the goblins to protect Harry. An ugly look crossed his face as he thought of Dumbledore and Peter. They had destroyed the Potters all for access to their vaults. Well even if it would kill him and it would probably would, well he didn’t care if he died, he would do so protecting his Godson and tearing the rat and Dumbledore to pieces.

Sirius was many things, impetuous, careless, short-tempered, quick to condemn, extremely short sighted and even silly at times, but what he was not was stupid.

He knew what it must have cost Snape to give his oath and bare his heart to Remus and him, for that was what Snape had done. Bared his heart. Ruthlessly not justifying himself or making excuses for himself. Sirius had to applaud Snape for that. He knew if the positions were reversed, he would most likely kill himself for having to do what the git had done today.

He also realized he had to work with 'Hooked Nose' for the rest of his life if Harry was to have a small chance to beat the people who were the most influential and the most powerful, as well as the most evil and cruel wizards of their time.

He sighed. He stood up unsteadily, with Remus's help. He looked steadily at Snape and said only a few words, "I owe you a life debt that can never be repaid for all that you have done so far and are planning to do for Harry. Thank you for trying to get me out even though you did it on Lily's request. You have given me a reason to live and a way to make this useless life worth while. I can never thank you enough."

He fell silent and held out his hand, his eyes never wavering from Snape's. Snape was dumbfounded and totally shocked to the core as he thought back to what Black was saying. He flushed with just a little bit of satisfaction and relief and then slowly extended his hand met Sirius's hand half way. Remus placed his hand on their as well and said, "Together." Snape and Sirius repeated it after him solemnly as well and then Snape was all business.

He asked Sirius for his oath and after receiving it, he turned his attention to the parchment and also told Sirius that they would be leaving for Gringotts from here and if they wished, they could view the pensieve memories and Sirius could set his affairs in order.

"What will you do?" asked Snape curiously. "Transfer all the liquid assets and the contents of the vaults to another name and leave the rest to Harry, tying it up with the Potter inheritance.

Snape nodded briskly. He then cancelled all the wards and looking around, asked of the woods, "If you are really against Dumbledore and you really want to help us, how will we be able to contact you, if

we really need your help? And won't you give us a hint about who you really are?"

The voice seemed to smile as it answered.

*I cannot really reveal myself to you at this present moment Severus. Of course I can and definitely will help you in any way I can and I am speaking for my husband as well. I have placed four rings outside the woods from where you came as well as a parchment that looks like an ordinary parchment, in which you may write your queries or your doubts.*

*I will answer them to the best of my ability. The rings will work as portkeys only when you have been given permission to come here by me. They will remain only rings otherwise, though they will not be removable or visible. Please place them on your fingers. There are two ruby rings for Remus and Sirius and two green rings for Harry and yourself.*

*To leave here today, you may use your galleons, yes Remus I know of them and from the next time you will be transported to Potter castle.*

"How can I ever thank you Madame? You have done me a great service by rescuing me from Azkaban and giving me an opportunity to work to destroy Dumbledore and Peter."

Sirius gritted his teeth. He had spent nine bloody years in Azkaban, listening to his own feelings of despair and his desperation about his brother's child, a brother in every way except blood that James was. And now to find it was not Voldemort and Peter but Dumbledore and Peter who was responsible for killing all the members of James's family except Harry to access the bloody vaults for Merlin's sake, Sirius could feel the steam coming out of his ears.

*You need not thank me child, all three of you have your work cut out for the next several years. Go now to Gringotts, put your affairs in order and leave in the night to the home of Harry Potter and take him away to his castle, cut his hand and place it on the wards. Allow the wards to accept him before you make him key you into the wards.*

*My husband and I will give time till tomorrow morning before Albus finds out Harry has gone. The only place Harry cannot be touched by Albus is the castle and so make sure Harry is inside the wards before morning with all of you.*

*Severus you must go back in the morning to finish your duties and act normally. What? How do I know? I have my own methods of knowing what is happening inside Hogwarts. Do you have anymore questions for me? If not you must leave as it is getting late.*

The three of them thanked the beautiful and peaceful voice and left the lovely and calming woods and went outside. "You seem quite all right, I think the Voice has healed you fully."

"Yes Snape, though I have no idea of coming out of Azkaban or being wherever I was for how many days, it's all a mystery to me let me tell you." Sirius shook his head as he realized he had no clue about his rescue or about his healing.

They picked up the rings that were beautiful and very simple. They were just bands that blended into their skins and vanished. All three of them looked at each other in amazement.

They held Sirius and activated the galleons and in a moment left the beautiful woods and had landed in a small niche just outside Turdin's office. All at once some twenty-five goblins came and surrounded them, their spears trained on Sirius who just gulped.

Turdin came rushing out and when he saw the three of them, he was very relieved. He took them into his office and soon had all the details in front of him. He was scowling heavily as he realized that the eyes had penetrated the Gringotts offices and he had no idea till then.

He did not know those eyes were in the same room then. He would have suffered a massive coronary. Turdin promised to himself he would do something about it and then briskly attended to the other things.

The first thing they got out of the way was the will of Sirius Black dated three days after Harry's first birthday and specifically leaving

everything to him. All the liquid assets were transferred to another anonymous vault with the name of David Kent.

Sirius also went through a blood ritual that would help him to transfer all properties in Harry's name and make him his legal heir, in a way no one will be able to deduct the fact he was living all the time when Harry would be his inheritor or fight Harry for it.

That went quickly and Turdin passed over the copies of the memories of Lily for all of them to see and gave them particulars about the Potter castle and a small box that held the Potter rings that alone could take them to the castle.

Snape had also requested that they make sure the Dursleys and Mrs. Figg would not disturb them while they went away with Harry. The goblin asked them to wait till ten 'o' clock in the night before going there and both of them would be taken care of.

Remus also closed his vault making it look as if he had no vault there for more than five years and moved his few knuts and sickles to another vault, thereby completely hiding his whereabouts.

They shrunk the box that held the precious memories and took their new keys, then Snape, Lupin and Sirius, with a goblin glamour on strolled out to Diagon Alley.

Sirius marveled at the changes and they went shopping for Remus, Sirius and Harry. Both Sirius and Snape did not hear a word of the rather strong protest that Remus worked up himself into. They got all kinds of things and all types of books, stationary, robes, undergarments and Snape stocked on all kinds of potion ingredients.

They then got Nimbus brooms for all of them and then shopped for shoes. They then went into Knockturn Alley and got an appointment at a wand crafter's shop for that night at eleven and satisfied with their work strolled back to The Leaky Cauldron, had a full dinner that Sirius ate with wonder on his face and walked back to Gringotts at half past nine.



There everything was ready and they decided to leave at once as they would have to come back to Knochurn Alley for making Harry's wand. Turdin gave Snape two very small vials filled with blood.

"These contain the blood of his parents. Use it on his wand and bind it to him and make the wand obey him and make him cast his spells stronger."

Snape took the vials that had just a few drops of blood in each and carefully stored it in his robes. The eyes looked upon Turdin in approval and blinking once, it was gone.

Snape, Sirius and Remus without their glamour and very alert left for No.4 Privet Drive. They apparated at the end of the road cast invisibility spells on themselves and walked to the door. Snape looked furtively around, while Sirius tremendously excited cast the '*alohomora*'.

All of them went inside quietly and locked the door. They looked around curiously but could not make out anything and Snape lifted his wand and said, "Point me Harry."

The wand pointed straight. Snape frowned as there was only the small door under the stairs. He walked towards it and as a precaution cast silencing charms all over the area.

He went near the door and said the words, "Point me Harry," once again. The wand again pointed straight at the small door that looked like it was good only for keeping brooms and other cleaning equipment.

Snape slowly opened the door that was locked from the outside and peered inside, with a candle he had conjured before he opened the door.

It was a very small room that had a camp bed laid out in the middle of the room and two small shelves that housed shabby clothes. On the far end of the wall there was a paper that said "Mummy and Daddy" in childish writing and the drawing though barely recognizable as two people, seemed to hold a place of pride.

On the floor where the camp bed that looked about a hundred years old, was a small boy who was sleeping deeply, looking very peaceful. By his bed was a pair of spectacles, that looked broken at three places and cracked in one lens.

Snape repaired the glasses first, cancelled the invisibility charms and turned around to signal calm and quiet, lest they put Harry into a panic, when they woke him up.

Sirius had almost gone into a fury that threatened to flatten the entire house; his magic was at the point of losing all the control that he was unfortunately not exerting at that point. The usually calm Lupin was no help there as he was actually growling at seeing Harry. Why, even he did not live like this.

Snape was alarmed. While he was also shocked, he was not affected as the other two and the fact they were here on a mission helped to keep his rationality.

He gestured for silence and calm from the other two, a little desperately when a little noise made him turn around. He saw James Potter's little boy sitting up in bed with his hands on his mouth.

"Who are all of you? Please go away." He said sounding very scared, probably thinking all of them were thieves.

"Harry?" said Sirius, looking at him with eyes that somehow could not control or stop the tears that were falling down.

"Oh my gosh! How do you know my name? Are they sending me away? Please, please I will be better and do all my chores prop'ly from now on and I won't do anything bad. Please. Please," Harry's voice reflected the terror that was in his eyes as well.

Snape pulled Sirius who seemed incapable of speech and Lupin who was standing in shock and went forward.

"Harry," he began softly. "We are friends of your parents. We only knew now that you are not being treated as you should be by the people who are your relatives. So we have come to take you away."

“You knew my Mummy and Daddy?”

“Yes Harry. All of us did and now all of us have come to take you with us.”

Harry’s eyes shone with hope, before they dulled again. “But Sir, how did you come in? When the Dursleys come back they will be so angry you broke in and,” very hesitantly, “I never need to come back again?”

“Never Harry and we will take good care of you. Your parents loved you very much and they will be pained to know you have been put into a cupboard by your aunt.” For the life of him, Snape could not keep the anger he felt against the Dursleys out of his voice.

Harry’s face lit up the whole place as he heard about his parents.

“Child, we must tell you something important before you leave. Will you be quiet till I finish before you ask questions of me?” asked Snape.

Harry nodded.

“Your parents were not ordinary people Harry. They were a wizard and witch.” seeing Harry’s eyes become round like saucers and just a bit frightened, he said soothingly, “It is nothing to be scared of Harry. Your mother was one of the most courageous and intelligent woman. You must have had something that were unnatural that happened to you do you not remember?”

Harry nodded in sudden understanding. “Yes, Sir once when I was running, I suddenly found myself on the school roof. I was punished for going there and I never meant to. Was, was it this wizard thing?”

Merlin the boy had apparated with his magic suppressed! “Yes,” Snape said softly. Catching hold of his hand, he pulled Harry out of his cupboard and introduced all of them to Harry.

“Harry, my name is Severus Snape. This is your father’s friend Remus Lupin and this is your Godfather. His name is Sirius Black.”

Sirius came to a bewildered Harry and his face still wet with the tears that he could not stop and hugged him fiercely. Lupin followed suit and Harry had received his first hugs after his parents' deaths.

"You are my Godfather?" he asked in a voice that was full of wonder and hope, wonder that he had some other family apart from the Dursleys and hope that he could really, really leave here and not come back.

"Yes Harry and all this while," "He was not well," said Snape smoothly, with a warning look at Sirius. "You see Harry now that he is fine; we want to take you away from here. We do not want to fight with the Dursleys and make things unpleasant, so we came here when they had gone out."

That made sense to Harry. He too, did not want the Dursleys to fight with these people. If they did they might not want to send him with these people and that somehow scared Harry more than anything else. He nodded his head vigorously.

Lupin spoke for the first time since he saw Harry. "Harry," he said softly, "Shall we go and pack your things. Severus and Sirius can stay here and write a note to your aunt and uncle, okay?"

Harry put his hand into Lupin's hand and clasped it tightly and both of them walked the few steps into the cupboard. Lupin removed the picture of his parents and smiled at Harry, "You draw nicely Harry." And watched the look of pleasure that bloomed in his face at the small gesture of appreciation and at that moment Lupin could have turned into Moony and torn Dumbledore and Peter to shreds and even eaten them as a final insult.

There was hardly anything to pack. Lupin removed a bottomless bag he had brought with him and soon packed the meager stuff that Harry called his own. He did not take any of the clothes and packed only the books and little things Harry had collected over the years.

They were mostly broken toys but Lupin knew Harry would want them for now at least. He banished the clothes and the camp bed and the room was empty.

As they came into the living room, Harry suddenly drew back. "You, all of you, will not bring me back here later will you? Even as a punishment? I will be real good and I swear I won't do anything wrong or disobey you."

"No Harry we will never bring you back here. If you do anything wrong you will be punished but that won't mean a trip here. We will be taking you to your own home, a home in which your parents and your grandparents lived before them." Sirius had knelt down and had put his arm around the too thin boy who looked about a frail seven and not a healthy nine.

"What! I have a home? Of my own?" asked a totally shocked Harry.

"Yes, Harry that is where we will be going. But before that we need you to get a wand, see, like what we have so that you can also do magic."

"Wow!" was all that Harry said and then, Snape went to Harry and easily lifted him up.

"Hey!" as Harry shouted, Snape explained, "Harry we are going to travel in a different way. Since you do not know how, I will be taking you around till you learn, all right?" he finished softly.

Blushing, Harry nodded his head a little, still obviously embarrassed.

They had not left any letter. They decided to make it appear as if Harry had run away. They knew that the tracking charms would alert the Headmaster that Harry was not at the place he was supposed to be. They really did not care.

Snape quickly cast glamours charms at all of them as Harry watched fascinated by the first bit of magic he had seen in living memory and then handed the heavy cloaks they had bought earlier at Diagon Alley. As soon as were sufficiently dressed all of them disappeared.

A second later four persons disappeared from No 4, Privet Drive all of them happy to get away from there.

Another second later all of them appeared at the entrance of Diagon Alley.

"Don't say anything from now on and let me do the talking okay Harry?" asked Snape in a whisper. Harry nodded awed at all that he was seeing, even though most of the shops were closing down. All four of them walked swiftly, Snape in the lead, Harry and Sirius in the middle and Remus bringing up the rear.

They entered Knockturn Alley and went to the wand crafter whose shop already had a 'closed' sign on the door. Snape just pushed the door and went inside.

The shop was dimly lit and a man was waiting behind the counter. "About time. I was going to give up on you and retire."

"We are sorry, my son was late from his friend's house." Said Snape smoothly.

"How old is he any way?"

"Old enough that I wish to teach him our ways. How is he to go about this now?"

"Let him choose the wood and the core or cores and I will craft it for you." Said the wand crafter not very interested.

Snape took Harry to where the different kinds of woods were kept and told him to run his hands through them and tell him if any felt just right or warm to him. Harry did so and felt a piece of wood that kept coming into his hand. He removed that and gave it to Snape and repeated the same exercise for the cores. He found four.

He handed it over to a shocked Snape who handed it to an equally shocked wand keeper, who kept muttering it was very unusual.

"Well, the lad has got an unusual combination of cores. While all of them who come here have at least three cores, no one has had this combination of holly wood with the cores of a Grim's tooth, werewolf hair, basilisk venom and phoenix blood willingly given. And you want me to mix it with these two vials of family blood. It will be a fine,

powerful and extremely unusual wand that will probably only work for him.”

He said no more but set to work. In about an hour's time he had the wand ready with a wand holster that he made along with it.

He gave it to Harry and as Harry took it in his hand the wand buzzed loudly and then lay still.

“It has just bonded with you sonny. Give it a wave.”

Harry gave a gentle wave and the room was filled with bright sparks of gold, red and green.

“Kid you'll be powerful, no doubt about it. You have a strong magical core.”

Harry smiled shyly and muttered his thanks. He was too awed by all of what had happened in the last two hours, it had not really sunk into him.

They paid the money and left the shop and went back to Diagon Alley and went into a small side alley, where Snape casting a few wards, took out the small box and removed the rings that no one other than a Potter could wear.

By wearing these two rings, Harry would officially become the head of the Potter family. The Black ring would be worn after the golem collapsed.

He placed the two beautiful rings made of gold and having a ruby and an emerald as the center piece of each ring, probably the rings of Gryffindor and Slytherin, thought Snape with reverence. He also added the green ring from the Voice in the woods.

The two rings blended with each other glowed and vanished to the eye. The green ring also blended with the other rings and then Snape lifted Harry and spoke to him softly.

“Now I want you to think of Potter castle and concentrate hard.”

Sirius and Remus also held on to Harry tightly.

“How, I have never been there.” Then as he realized what Snape was saying, “What! Castle? How?” he stuttered his eyes as wide as they could go.

Snape couldn't help it. He smiled. “Yes Harry, Potter castle. All of us will tell you everything later. We must first go there, okay? Now I know you have no idea about it. Just close your eyes and think of Potter castle saying it in your mind.”

A minute of silence later all four of them found themselves in a place that was pitch dark and no sound anywhere nearby.

Snape let Harry down and walked a step when he hit the wards. He took Harry's hands and explained to him about what he was about to do and then let the wards recognize Harry.

Later, after half an hour Harry had done his first bit of intentional magic, by keying in the other three into the Potter castle wards.

All of them happy and with Harry squealing with joy as Sirius now lifted him, walked to the main doors of the castle smiling, chatting and very relieved.

End of Chapter – 6

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## Chapter – 7

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It was after midnight as the four of them knocked on the door. It was opened a minute later by an old elf who peered at all of them before its eyes came to rest on Harry's face.

The elf's eyes widened with shock and surprise and turned to delight as it looked at him and look at the others once more.

"How are you Celly?" asked Sirius gently.

"Oh, it is Master Sirius. Have they found out you are innocent after all?" it cried.

Sirius was shocked. "You knew I was innocent, Celly?" he asked.

"Of course, Master Sirius. Mistress Lily had told all of us Peter was the secret keeper and if you and master Remus come to the castle we have to welcome you."

All of them were dumbfounded as they thought to the lengths Lily had gone to protect all of them, if they were alive after nine years and were willing to help Harry.

As Sirius let Harry down he was fiercely hugged by about Celly and then by twenty elves who had popped up from everywhere. Harry was overwhelmed and very scared as he looked at these strange creatures that came from nowhere and everywhere and fell on him ecstatically.

Snape saw the fear expressed in Harry's face and he knelt down and pulled Harry from the exited and squealing elves that were expressing their happiness rather tearfully about a Potter coming back to the castle after nine years.

Snape then told the elves Harry had been raised as a muggle and he was not aware of the magical world. He then softly told the elves to take them to their rooms and Harry to the Master bedroom.

Harry listening to all this was overcome by many emotions. What was Sirius innocent of and why did the elves, gosh! What strange looking things. So scary really! What had happened to his Mummy and Daddy? Why were the elves crying about his grandparents?

Snape held Harry's hand tightly and all four of them went through the hallway and up the stairs and were taken first to the Master bedroom. Harry looked around in wonder. God! It was huge. It was bigger than the whole of No. 4, Privet Drive. It had a bed that was twenty times as big as his camp bed and there was a book shelf in one corner, a dressing table in another and a sitting room as well.

There were two doors set on the right hand side of the room and Harry suddenly did not want to be alone. He looked pleadingly at Snape whose hand he was still holding and hesitated not knowing how to put it into words and very embarrassed about expressing his fear.

It had been too much to take in all at once and Harry's primary thought had been to get away from the Dursleys and these people had been friends of his parents, were a bonus.

He was tired of, now he understood; doing magic and being punished for it by being locked inside his cupboard for days together and when he had seen these strangely dressed men he had gone with them, knowing no one could be worse than the Dursleys.

But to own a wand, jump from place to place and realize, after not owning even a plastic spoon, now he was the owner of a castle and had three costly rings that glowed and vanished when he put them on, was a bit too much to take in all at once. The elves had been the last straw and Harry was understandably confused, scared and not wanting to be alone.

Snape felt an emotion that he did not recognize as he looked down at the frightened face that was pleading with him. It was affection and he felt his heart tug at him as he looked into the small face and he smiled. He just could not help it. He smiled again.

"Harry would you like all of us to bunk in with you and tell you about your Mummy and Daddy?" he asked softly.

That is what they did that night. All of them though very tired were filled with a sense of purpose and the fact they had made a beginning. They sprawled out on the huge bed that still had space left and talked to Harry telling him all about magic, his mother, his father, the Wizarding world, Hogwarts and a little of this and a little of that.

Harry had his own questions that he asked with vigor once he knew he would not be punished for asking. He asked many things and they answered all questions, except the area of his parents' deaths, Sirius's imprisonment and why it had taken all of them nine years to get Harry out of his cupboard.

"Harry these queries will be answered tomorrow when all of us are fresh from having rested. These are very important questions, you have asked and the answers you will receive will be equally important. To understand them all of us have to be alert and now none of us are."

"Then will you tell me tomorrow, Sir?"

"You may take it as a promise. You will also stop calling me or any of the others as Sir. I am Severus, this is Remus and he is Sirius, all right?" Snape asked him softly.

"Or you may call me Padfoot, Remus, Moony and Severus, Sev, okay Harry?"

Harry flushed with pleasure and did not notice the glare Snape gave Sirius who merely grinned. Snape was about to say something cutting, when he saw Harry's flushed face grinning hard. With great difficulty he swallowed his pearls of sarcasm and reluctantly smiled at Harry.

"Thanks, Sev, Moony, Padfoot," he grinned. Snape swallowed again and sighed. He knew that name had stuck and Merlin how he hated that abbreviation. Pah!

In no time all the adults were asleep. They had been through a trying day, especially Snape and Remus, and Sirius had been woken up by Remus only that afternoon, from sleeping away the after affects of Azkaban and the dementors.

But Harry could not sleep. His thoughts went round and round his head in dizzying circles as he tried to make sense of what had happened to him. He knew he heard only the good parts today and tomorrow would tell him why he had been rescued.

He was a child who had been forced to think of himself as a nonentity and he never knew what it was to be considered as a person in his own right. Today had been the day of many firsts.

He had been touched for other reason than to be hit or punched. He had been hugged. He had been carried. He had been told he was wanted. That more than anything had almost brought the small boy to tears.

He only hoped they would not throw him away after they had enough of him or he did what they wanted him to do. He prayed these strange men take him in, if not as their own; he did not want too much, at least allow him to stay with them.

The talks of all this being his was something he just could not digest as if all this was his and if all these, what were they called, yes elves were his, then why did he have to spend ten years in a cupboard? It was so silly.

As he was thinking, an arm came around him and a voice said sleepily, "Don't worry about anything Harry. It will all be fine, okay. Now come, sleep or you will feel tired tomorrow."

Harry felt strangely comforted by the sleep slurred voice of his Godfather and snuggling down into his arms and another pair of arms from the other side that enveloped him, that belonged to Snape, went happily to sleep, forgetting like a child he was for the first time, about his worries for the future.

The pair of eyes that even the formidable wards could not keep out smiled at the scene in the Master bedroom of the Potter castle. Remus was snoring away and next to him was Sirius who was snoring as well, reveling in sleeping on a comfortable bed after nine years, Harry who was sleeping with a smile and Snape, who looked very relaxed as he slept with his arm around the small boy holding him protectively.

The pair of eyes decided to give Snape another day to explain to Harry all the things they had missed. A note appeared out of nowhere and stated that it would keep Dumbledore out of the loop for one more day, incapacitating him for Snape to spend it with Harry. As usual they blinked and vanished.

It was afternoon when all of them woke up. They washed and as they were going down for breakfast noticed the note and Snape was thrilled to have another day with Harry and immediately frowned as that thought occurred to him. Happy to spend the day with Harry?

He had blushed when he had woken up from a peaceful sleep and found the little boy in his arms. Now he was glad he had another day to spend with the child. He had to take some time and work out what was wrong with him. As he was thinking, he was pulled out of his thoughts by Harry who dragged him from where he had stopped halfway down the stairs.

"Come on. We have to go down to eat." He said bubbling with joy. Snape smiled at him and went down and had lunch, they had slept through breakfast, and all of them went to the massive Library to discuss serious things.

Harry had wanted to see around the big castle and Remus and Sirius promised to show around the castle to both Harry, as well as Snape who had not been there before.

It took three hours for Sirius, Snape and Remus to tell Harry the whole story and how his grandparents' had been murdered, how his mother had planned and how after nine years of all of them thinking about Sirius being the secret keeper, everything came to light.

"Now Harry, we have told you everything we know and why we were late in fetching you and what you have to do to live happily. It is a daunting task, but we are there with you every step of the way." Said Sirius deeply sad as he thought of what Harry had on his plate.

"Not only that Harry, you also have the voice that will help us. Both her and her husband." Said Remus softly looking with concern at the boy who, in a day had his whole life turned upside down.

Harry was sprawled out full length on the sofa as he took in the details of his life that was put in front of him.

"If this Dumbledore was a bad man then why do people believe him so?"

"Because no body knows all that we do." said Snape softly.

"Then why can't we tell them all that we know?" Harry was puzzled as he thought. It was so simple to him. This man had done such bad things; he ought to be in prison and here he was being the Headmaster and a very important person.

"We cannot Harry. Even now he will be furious when he knows you are missing. Your parents and grandparents were killed by this man and till Severus received that letter from Gringotts no one knew Dumbledore was responsible. To bring him down we must be as clever as him, otherwise he will try to harm us, for you he already has plans." This was Remus.

"Yeah, I know he wants to do me in and for what? Some money? He must be mad. Say, why don't we give the money to him and go far, far away from here and live happily, all of us, you know, so that this stupid guy won't be able to hurt us."

"Oh! Harry." Said Sirius sadly.

"Yes, we may go away but Harry neither Voldemort nor Dumbledore will let you be. Voldemort wants to kill you because of the Prophecy and Dumbledore because of the artifacts in the vaults. How long can we keep on running, Harry? Remember both of them are very powerful magically." Snape answered the child.

Harry looked downcast. "Don't be scared Harry. We are all here and we will make sure you will be trained properly before you meet him. We would have not told you all this now and scared you but anything we say about your parents and how they died and the true reason as to why you were left with your relatives will sound false and will not convince you. Otherwise, child, if only we could save you don't you think we would have?"

“Oh! Sev’rus I never meant to doubt you or anything,” Harry was aghast Snape might mistake him.

Snape drew the child to him. He could understand the fear that was in Harry’s voice. It was a huge, huge thing for this boy to go from worrying about how to stay away from his relatives’ disdain and his cousin’s violence to having to tackle the two most powerful people in their world.

But Harry would surprise him.

Sirius was also holding Harry from the other side as Remus was sprawled on a sofa nearby.

“I never said you doubted me, Harry,” he said softly. “But this is a relationship none of us wanted to start with a lie as too much is at stake.”

Harry was silent for a long time, the others too chose to remain silent and give him the space to take it all in.

Then suddenly Harry looked at all three of them and smiled. Confused they smiled back.

“You know if these two buffoons will not let us be, maybe we should make them to do so and also punish them for doing what they did to Mummy and Daddy and Sirius. Then all of us can go away and be happy?”

Snape couldn’t help it. He hugged the little boy as did Sirius, who said, “You bet, Harry. We are going to really punish them and even make sure they won’t go around killing people for the fun of it or for stealing their money.”

Harry decided that he would do his best to defeat the two bad men. He had been given a chance at happiness after wishing forever and he was not going to let it slip through his fingers.

He looked at Sirius and grinned at him. “Tell me what I have to do and I’ll do it prop’ly, swear.”

"Kid, you have to be trained and we can start preparing you from tomorrow. All of us will start training you in all that we know and soon you will be able to do away with those maniacs." Sirius grinned back at him.

"Come on now, you wanted to explore the castle didn't you? And Black where did you get your wand? I never saw you buying one yesterday?" asked Snape as he saw Sirius placing his wand into his robes.

"This was a special handcrafted wand I had made in the same place we went yesterday. I had made two of them, placed one in the vault and had the other with my normal wand. At that time I thought if one wand got lost I would be able to continue fighting with the other."

He shrugged, "As it happened that didn't happen, and they broke the other two, but this was safe."

They spent the next three hours till dinner exploring the castle and Sirius and Remus telling Harry all about his family and the fun they had here when they were young.

Harry listened raptly and hung on every word of Sirius and Remus. Snape was rather silent snorting softly at some of the more silly exploits of the infamous four, who had given him so much trouble. He did not have the heart to say something contradictory though and wound Harry who was obviously healing his heart and soul by knowing his parents through these two.

"Sev, were you not friends with Mummy and Daddy?" Harry asked.

Sirius and Remus suddenly became tense. What if Snape went and said everything opposite to what they had? It would break Harry's heart.

"I was in a different House, Harry and I really did not know them well enough." Said Snape with gritted teeth as he blatantly lied about his pet hates.

"Otherwise all of you could have been best friends Sev'rus," said Harry cheerfully amidst an incredulous, but helpless silence.



Sirius was so grateful to Severus Snape at that moment he actually said so. "Thanks Severus. You'll never know how much." He said softly not wanting Harry to hear and spoil everything.

Snape looked startled as if he did not expect Sirius of all people to thank him. He flushed a second later and snapped equally softly, keeping an eye on Harry who was chattering happily with Remus.

"You surely did not expect me to tell the boy how loathsome all of you were and shatter his image of his father. Even I am not so bad, Black."

Sirius did not respond as he was still feeling gratitude to Snape for allowing him to bond with his Godson. Already Harry was looking different from the boy of yesterday.

They walked back leisurely to the dining room and had a simple dinner and retired to their rooms this night telling Harry to give a shout if he needed any of them.

Harry was quite content with that and all of them went to spend a peaceful night of pleasant dreams.

The next morning, Snape carefully dressed as austere as he always used to and pulling up his Occlumency shields to full strength, left for Hogwarts immediately after breakfast, after saying his goodbyes to Harry and the other two.

"Harry, I will be leaving for Hogwarts now, and you must be good and do your studies from today with Lupin and Black."

"Come back soon, okay, I will miss you?" said Harry hugging him.

Snape felt another strange emotion rise in his chest and burying it quickly, there would be no time to analyze it now, returned the hug, nodded to the other two and left.

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The pair of eyes had worked well. They had with the help of the three spies within Hogwarts; they had twisted the truth a little bit to Snape

and the others, made sure Albus was unwell from the morning Snape had left Hogwarts. So Albus also wondering if someone had pranked him as well was miserably staying in.

He was feeling confused as his magic was going haywire and after Snape, now Minerva had sent word through the elves that she was feeling unwell.

They were his two trusted Professors and it alarmed him all the three of them were incapacitated in one way or the other.

He frowned as he thought about the significance of this and felt he was missing something he should have known. He smiled as Fawkes trilled softly and petted him absently.

He lay down and drifted off thinking about just what was that he had missed that made it possible for all three Professors to be ill and down at the same time. He smiled as he thought of the boggart prank that someone had thrown at Snape. Really to see him that frightened was funny.

The next day his magic had still not settled and by afternoon he was sure something major was going on. Snape had still to come and the elves told him Minerva had not moved from her bed since the day before and he started getting jittery as he thought of all things that could go wrong as he lay there.

He took a powerful sleeping and a general healing potion and slept almost immediately not waking up till after breakfast the next morning. He was pleased to see he was all right.

He went to his headmaster's office room at once to see if all things were in order. Everything seemed fine. As he was turning to leave a particular instrument caught his attention. It was not as it should be.

Harry was not at Privet Drive.

He frowned. Had the Dursleys ill-treated him so much that he was forced to run away and why did Arabella not say anything? He sighed. He would have to go and retrieve Harry, and make the hating charm milder.

He went down swiftly to the Great Hall and saw Snape and McGonagall entering. Both of them greeted him and Snape looked astonished as McGonagall asked him how he was.

“Albus! Are you well? I have never seen you unwell before and you were not seen for almost two days.”

“I could say the same about you Minerva, and yes I am quite all right, thank you” He smiled, “And you Severus, how are you today?”

“I am well, Headmaster and if I ever find the cretin who sent me that letter,” he broke off darkly, wondering about what had happened to Dumbledore. “What happened to you? Minerva was asking about your health. Did you receive a letter too?”

Albus laughed, “No, but I was very sick and unable to work. The strange thing was the fact my magic was going haywire.”

“I could not lift my head Albus. It was terrible though this morning I am all right.” Said McGonagall.

“As I am. There is something fishy about this. You, Severus and I, all of us not quite okay for the last two days and now I find we have a problem.”

Severus tensed. He knew it was now. He was not disappointed. “Harry has been missing since yesterday. I was just leaving to see the Dursleys.”

“Good riddance.” Snarled Snape as McGonagall glared at him, about to say something nasty, Albus intervened, “Now Severus, there is no need to get nasty,” he smiled and on a sudden impulse asked both of them to come with him. He would return and oblivate the boy later, now these two would help him search.

“Of course I will, but Severus here might have far better things to do with his time, Albus and where could have Harry gone away like that?” she said scowling at Snape as he snorted at the show of concern.

Albus intervened and shushing them went along with them softly talking with them all the time wondering about the boy.

They walked to the edge of the wards and apparated to Privet Drive and walked to the Dursleys casting notice-me-charms all over them.

Petunia opened the door and seeing three freaks rather than people her smile faded and she tried to close the door. She knew it was about the disappearance of the boy and she had been dreading this from the time they realized he was missing.

Well, she had decided it wasn't their fault if the blasted boy chose to run away. She squashed down the mild feeling of guilt, knowing if the positions were reversed, Lily would have taken far better care of Dudders than she had of Harry.

But then again, her Precious was not a freak like her nephew. Naturally she could not shut the door against two wizards and one witch and all of them went inside, McGonagall glaring, Snape in utter disdain on the outside and very alert on the inside and Albus thoughtful.

His senses were screaming at him telling him, something was wrong and he knew it was somehow connected to all of them being sick for the last two days.

"Hello Petunia, how are you and when did young Harry run away?"

"I really don't know. We found he was missing only last night when he did not come inside to sleep. We had only returned from Marge's yesterday morning. It was careless of him to go away and leave the house untended" Petunia replied stiffly.

"What!!! You dared leave a small boy all alone and go away somewhere." McGonagall was unable to speak as she was so furious. Snape watching all this marked her as a potential candidate for their side if she would continue in this way.

"Albus I told you not to leave Harry with these, these *things*. Now, look at what they have done." She said not caring about the furious look Petunia gave her and glaring back at her equally furiously.

Albus felt a headache coming on. It was a bad idea to ask these two to come with him. "So," he said gently, "You have no idea as to where he might have run away. Does he have any friends to whom he might have gone?"

Petunia shook her head. Albus swung into action. He gave a complicated twist of his wand and started chanting. After about five minutes, he placed the wand on his hand and waited.

Snape watched barely breathing. This was the ultimate test as to whether they had hid Harry properly, as he had no time to prepare the necessary potions to remove any charms that might have been incorporated with Harry's blood.

The wand turned about five times and then fell out from the Headmaster's hand. Albus's face darkened as he summoned the wand back to him and cast the same spell again. The result was the same as well.

Albus was angry. The spell was a Dark spell that called the blood of Harry and would reveal to him, exactly where he was. He had already bonded the blood of Harry to his call.

Snape was watching in horror. The maniac had bound Harry's blood to answer his call? He waited anxiously as did McGonagall. But as minutes passed, there was no answer to the eight calls Albus made.

He turned to Petunia and said, "I hope for your sake he is found Petunia, I am afraid you will be in a lot of trouble otherwise."

He watched with satisfaction as she paled. The eyes that had followed him were amused and decided to do something about Albus's threat to the Dursleys. While they were not the best of persons, they were made to act horribly by Albus's hate charm. You could not blame them fully.

Albus strode out in anger and walked straight to Arabella Figg's house. She did not open the door and they broke their way into the house to see it in complete disarray.

Arabella was not to be seen anywhere. He hollered for her and she came down looking very weak a few minutes later. "What, Albus? What happened? I was feeling under the weather for the last three days. In fact I was in bed just now."

Albus was stumped. What was happening here? All his careful plans were coming to naught. How could a boy with so many spells on him disappear like this? How could he not be able to call him when he had bound Harry's blood to him?

Someone had taken Harry away. Who?

End of Chapter – 7

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## Chapter – 8

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Albus, Snape and McGonagall returned to Hogwarts shortly after. Albus was fuming and they had walked back to the Dursleys and once again checked for any type of magical presence but could not detect anything out of the normal. In fact there was nothing out of the ordinary to tell him that a magical wizard boy had resided there and had vanished.

Albus had shown far more than he had intended. He had planned to use the ordinary tracking charm only. But he had been forced to use the more complicated calling spell as the ordinary tracking charm refused to even register.

That was when he feared Harry was kidnapped by someone powerful and with great resources. Snape and Minerva had watched with astonishment as they witnessed a furious and a foaming at the mouth Albus Dumbledore.

Albus always exhibited his anger by an exhibition of his power that was visible and one that would calm down the opponent. Today, however he was exhibiting his anger in a blustering way that showed his helplessness.

Without a word to either Snape or McGonagall, Albus went to his office. From his office, he flooed again to The Leaky Cauldron and went to Diagon Alley and apparated to his home. He immediately called Arthur, who was at the Ministry and Peter, who was in the Weasley's home as Percy Weasley's pet rat.

Wormtail had a small invisible collar that would tingle in a particular way that would tell him the urgency of Albus's call. As he was snoring that day on the window sill of Percy's room, a tingle woke him up.

The call from Albus told Peter that something serious was going on. He immediately ran into the woods that surrounded The Burrow and changing, apparated to the source of the call, that was from Albus's home.

Meanwhile Albus had called for Fawkes and was waiting for the other two to arrive. As soon as they did he briefed them about all that had happened.

“Arthur, you must check up on Black. Harry did not respond to my call. That means he is behind powerful blood wards, wards more powerful than the ones I have cast on him.”

“But how can that be, we have been checking on him regularly and those people have been ill-treating him so beautifully.” Arthur was understandably confused and then he continued.

“If you will wait for some time, I will be back, bringing you news about Black. If it is Black who has somehow escaped from Azkaban, then we can narrow our search and even find both of them and take care of them.” he finished.

“Yes, you do that and if it is Black, then he has asked for his death in the most horrible manner. This time we will not keep Harry with his relatives, though, I will bring him here and keep him under the influence of a nice imperious, till he can open the vaults for us.” Albus was almost screaming and had become purple in anger, an anger he could not exhibit in front of others.

Arthur then left a fuming and an out of control Albus he had never seen before and a worried Peter.

What he forgot in his haste to find Harry was the fact that he had shown Snape and McGonagall a spell he had cast on a small boy was so dark, it was one of the banned spells, banned by the Ministry. And he had apparently cast it when Harry had been younger than he was now.

Albus and Wormtail were waiting rather impatiently for Arthur to return from the Ministry. Peter was feeling slightly apprehensive as Sirius would search him out and attack him on so many counts.

“You know, Albus if Black has escaped, then we should make sure he is able to track me and find me as well. We could have a golem that would be me, with a portkey worked into it and we will get him the



moment he gets to me and through him Harry and the Black fortune as well. What do you say?"

Albus smiled. "Brilliant idea. Who were the fools who said you were weak and not very clever? Oh yes, I know, the ones who are dead, in prison and having a werewolf period once a month."

Both of them had a hearty laugh at that statement and visibly relaxed as they had already formulated a plan to get Black and Harry, if it was indeed Black who had carted away with Harry.

Two hours later, a message came from Snape informing him and asking him permission to leave Hogwarts for the holidays as he had finished his work, that he had left undone two days back.

Albus sent a message accepting his request and spent another half hour happily with Peter laughing about Snape's boggart.

"You know Peter, though I laugh about Snape, he is one person who will do as I say without questions asked as he is in a position that solely exists on my support everyday. And Minerva is loyal to me to a fault.

"It is strange that all three of us were not in good health or mind for the last three days, and when we get well, Harry is gone. Black is not so clever nor is he so powerful. Harry has not answered my call and I called eight times. That is what is truly worrying."

Peter frowned. How could that be? Sirius was definitely not so powerful and Remus did not even know where Harry lived. In fact apart from the three of them only Minerva and Arabella knew where Harry was. And both were very loyal to Albus.

It was truly a mystery as Peter knew the kind of power that must have been exerted by those who took Harry away to keep him from Albus's call EIGHT times. Not once or twice but eight times.

They had to wait for another six hours before Arthur came back. It was evening and Albus looked at him inquiringly, "Well, any news and is it good?"

Arthur collapsed into his chair. "No," started to say when Albus's started getting red with anger. "Calm down Albus. You would die of a heart failure and that would be of no use to us. I went to Azkaban that is why I am so late. I saw Black with my own eyes. He is horrible, Albus. I doubt he would last the week. His eyes were wild and he was incoherent and he did not know Harry, James or even Peter."

There was a heavy silence after that statement and Albus was totally lost for once. He had no answers. He had no clues. He had no ideas. The boy's magic was suppressed; his life dull and lonely and he had no support from anyone either in the muggle or the Wizarding world.

How had he got away? Who helped him escape and to where? As far as knew Harry had no idea of magic and nothing so far had happened to prove otherwise, Albus felt his head spinning round and round.

As the evening lengthened and the shadows lengthened as well, the brooding silence that had fallen among them also lengthened. Then Albus slowly stood up and patting Fawkes, asked him to take all of them to Privet Drive.

In a flash all of them were at Privet Drive. They had cast invisible charms on themselves and walked down to the Dursleys. The house was in total darkness and there was no sign of life any where.

They looked around and saw no one and did not notice the pair of eyes that were vastly amused as they waited to see the reaction of the three when they went inside. They opened the front door magically and going inside cast lighting spells to look around.

The whole place was stripped clean. There was not a thing in sight except a note that was fluttering at chest height looking slightly ridiculous and probably scary if you did not know it was a magical note and you were not a magical person.

Albus was angry beyond words by this time; his face bypassing the red, flushing deeply in anger, and his face was now in between purple and ashen white.

Before he touched the note, he cast spells to see if the note was clean and took the note in his hand and read it silently. He finished reading the note and his face succeeded in the transformation from ashen white to starkly pale and then to pure white and absolutely deathly.

*Dear Headmaster, (the note seemed to mock him, he felt)*

*We have left for places unknown and are under a collective and an individual Fidelus charm that would make it almost impossible for you to find us. **So do not even try.** The consequences would be disastrous for you as we have evidence of you placing a hating charm to abuse Harry and we have kept it safe, elsewhere to be automatically sent to the Wizengamot if you happen to find any one of us. **So do not try.***

*It is not our fault the boy ran away. We do not know and frankly we do not care. He has been more trouble than we imagined. Now I have used someone Lily introduced me to, to prepare the Fidelus. This person went through my mind and retrieved the memory that can create so much trouble for you. This person has promised to search for Harry and also bring him to us.*

***If we are able to find Harry, you may be rest assured; you will never get your dirty hands on him. Ever. Keep away from us.***

*Petunia Dursley.*

Who? How? Why now? Albus conjured chairs for all of them and they sat down heavily to ponder everything, Albus was feeling scared for the first time in his life.

Someone knew. How much did they know? Fully? Albus started sweating. Was this person also helping Harry? From the letter it looked as if Harry had run away, though.

“Albus call Harry again. Let us see if he responds.” A worried Arthur said looking at Peter who was also looking scared.

Albus called and this time there was no resistance whatsoever, and that meant the Dark spell that was in reality a curse had been removed from him altogether. Albus was frantic now.

But to no avail, nothing they did and they tried various things, nothing worked. They went back, disheartened and terribly anxious and very scared about everything that had happened that day.

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Meanwhile as Albus stomped off in anger, Snape was looking at McGonagall speculatively.

“Since when have you and the Headmaster been putting blood bond curse spells on little boys? And to think I was actually leaving the dark for the light.”

They were standing in the yard outside and Snape had one hand clutching his wand, prepared to oblivate her, if necessary. He just wanted to see how far she could be pushed.

McGonagall frowned, her face deep in thought. After a while she raised disturbed eyes to Snape.

“Severus, I swear, swear on my magic I had no idea. But what disturbs me is,” she broke off and taking his hand and leading him out and towards the lake.

Casting silencing charms all over as well as other wards, she stood in shock as Snape added another twenty wards in addition to what she had already cast.

“Now tell me,” he started softly.

“How could he cast a blood call curse on the child? It seems he had cast it long ago to add to the horror is. It was Albus, Severus and that is what disturbs me. It is something I would have expected of you and,” she held up a hand as he tried to refute it indignantly, “no, not because you were a death eater, but because you don’t view the Dark Arts like he does or did.” She finished bitterly.

Snape looked at her steadily as she tried to make sense and tried to see a way out, a reason for Albus to have cast it. Ten minutes later, she bowed down in defeat.

“How could he?” she whispered, betrayal of a man whom she had followed and till then, had never ever countered or doubted his commands, views or stands on any issue.

“I would have followed him to death, Severus. I thought till now he was our hope and our Light. How could he?” her voice broke on that word.

Minerva was a proud woman, proud almost to a fault. She was very fair, honest and simple in her life and her values were what drove her and she would die first rather than to compromise on her principles.

“Minerva, I am going to tell you something. Before, I begin; I must say there are powerful oblivation wards placed around us. Allow me to speak and it will be the truth, don’t worry, I will take an oath to that effect,” he stopped here and smiled at her wryly.

“In the last few months I have taken so many oaths I hope they do not get me killed. To continue, however, I wish for you to remain silent and then after I finish you may consider if you will join with us in which case, you will give me an oath or you will forget everything I say now due to these wards.”

Minerva McGonagall was bewildered. “You will give me an oath, and you have placed oblivation wards. What in Merlin’s name are they and what is it you wish to say that requires all this,” she broke off as sudden comprehension hit her, “It is about Albus isn’t it?”

Seeing Snape nod his head, a determined expression that meant business came over her. Snape having seen that look so many times as a student was relieved. He would get a fair hearing.

After an hour and a half, Minerva was stunned. Then she got up from where both of them had decided to sit down to speak and hugged a stunned Snape, who flushed in embarrassment.

“Of course Severus, I will help. In fact if you don't let me, I'll hex you.” She said normally, but her face was bitter. She had found her idol, her salvation for her world and a man she would have died to save, would have killed for fun. That hurt, hurt her chest and the ache grew till she hurt all over.

Snape took her oath and she sent Severus away to Harry saying she would finish his work and he must get Albus's permission to leave Hogwarts for the holidays and go to Harry.

She was planning to leave in two days for her own vacation and from now on she would spend it with them to train Harry and she would help him to defeat and kill Albus.

“Albus should not be allowed to live Severus. He would cause so much damage we would not be able to even limp back afterwards. We'll see how to accomplish that.” She finished fiercely.

Snape then went back to Potter castle to tell the others about the addition to their cause and to prepare the antidote for the blood call curse.

He was greeted with a yell and a hug; he smiled at Harry and scowled at Sirius and Remus just on principle and beckoning to them, went down to the potions lab located in the dungeons and straightaway started preparing an antidote and at the same time gave Harry his first potions lesson.

Five hours later Harry was totally hooked on potions and their effects and their reach.

Snape gave him the antidote and Harry fell over crying in pain as the antidote took effect. After fifteen minutes he sat up and declared he was fine.

Snape by then had told them about Albus as well as Minerva McGonagall. Sirius and Remus were stunned at first, but soon all of them started planning together. McGonagall could help them in so many ways, it would be so beneficial.

Snape with the help of Harry and the others had by then started preparing the other potions to rid Harry of all spells and dark curses he may have within him that had been cast by Dumbledore.

All of them stayed late into the night, Harry asking a hundred questions about potions and Snape patiently answering them. They were up early the next morning and continued the whole day with the various potions.

The next day Harry met his transfiguration Professor for the first time, when he went with the others to key her into the wards. She was greeted with shouts from Sirius and Remus and she surprised everyone by hugging Sirius after she had hugged Harry.

"I am sorry, Black. I really don't know what to say." She said, looking as if she had not slept for the last two days, which she really hadn't.

Sirius hugged her back and his whispered, "Don't worry, we'll get him." Bought a smile to her face. "We will indeed. We had better." Was all she said.

That day went in administering all the various potions and casting various spells by both McGonagall and Snape. Harry kept fainting and waking as the potions and the spells worked to release the suppressions of his magic and his gifts.

The day after McGonagall came was taken off for all of them to catch up with each other and to let Harry sleep of the tiring day he had had the day before.

Harry woke up late in the afternoon and it was decided he would start training from the next day. He had all of his suppression as well as curses now taken off. Snape had discovered the lightning bolt scar that Harry had reeked of a dark bonding curse.

He mentioned it to the others and after much discussion, they decided to remove the bond that most probably Albus had created with either Voldemort or himself, but kept the scar of the curse intact.

This way Albus would see the lightening bolt scar and it would satisfy him all was as it should be with the boy whom he wanted to control.

They discovered Harry had a strong magical core that would make learning and spell casting very simple to him. He also had the ability to speak to snakes and he had slight metamorphous talents. Not much, but he could change the shape and color of his hair, eyes and if he tried hard, his face.

They would also help him become an animagus and hone his skills if he had any in mind magic, ancient magic and parcel magic along with spell crafting, illusion magic, aura sight for which he had shown affinity and the like.

They spent the rest of the day drawing schedules and making notes on how he would actually be trained and for how long. They couldn't come to a conclusion till they saw how he would fare and cope up as well as adapt to all this.

Harry was thrilled by how light he felt once he had taken those horrible potions and they had cast those spells at him. He had slept right round the clock and had woken up ready for anything.

They next day Harry started his training and that day would set the tone for the next two years. His capacity for understanding was amazing and his willing to learn and soak up knowledge was astounding.

Snape and McGonagall left for Hogwarts in the last week of august. They had taken the maximum time with Harry as they would have to leave soon. Sirius and Remus would now take over from them.

Harry bid a sad good bye to both of them, as they promised to visit soon. The pair of eyes that had followed all this had created a floo from their bed chambers where it was totally safe, to Potter castle on the last night before they were due to leave as a surprise.

The eyes had also written a note saying the floo would be secure once Snape and McGonagall dropped a couple of drops of their blood on it. The note also said Harry, Sirius and Remus should also donate blood, so that once a small ritual was performed, the five people would be able to move freely to and fro, especially in times of an emergency.



No one would be able to access it as Snape and McGonagall would have to personally key them in. To all the others, it would be an ordinary fire place.

Harry was slightly cheered by this. He had changed beyond recognition in the last two months. He was now confident beyond words and his magic had only grown stronger.

He was studying first year magic and along with it he was also learning silent spell casting as well as wandless magic. Wandless magic a feat said to be impossible for everyone except the strongest of wizards came effortlessly to him. It had awed the others as first and then had filled all of them with happiness.

They could accomplish so much with it. McGonagall also started training him to use both hands for wandless magic so that he could cast the stronger spells with his wand, holding a shield or even attacking simultaneously with the other hand.

That started Harry's training with multiple and simultaneous spell casting. Of course, now in the beginning it was a *wingardium leviosa* with a simple *accio*, but slowly it would get more advanced as his studies progressed.

The attention he received with the unconditional love from all of them, had blossomed Harry to an extent he was unrecognizable even in the two short months they had known him.

Snape and McGonagall left for Hogwarts at different times, with both of them not meeting Albus on that day. They met him at breakfast the next day, where both of them observed him closely, while making a show of sniping at each other and also enquiring about Harry's whereabouts.

"So, Minerva, good to see you again, you are prepared to lose this year to us as well, I hope?" started Snape as Albus took his place at the table.

McGonagall snorted. "That was because you cheated your way last year by taking points off Gryffindor unfairly. Otherwise we would have wiped the floor with you."

Snape sneered at her, "Is this how you console yourself, by delusion?" And smirked, as she sputtered with anger and irritation, glaring at him.

Huffing, she turned to Albus and leaning slightly, "Were you able to find out about Harry, Albus? Is he safe now and really what possessed you to place such a dark spell on the little boy?" she finished indignantly.

"Why shouldn't he? It would not harm Saint Potter, not much at least." He replied seeming uncaring, but watching Albus intently for answers as was Minerva, as she answered him back.

"Severus that was a dark spell and if you admit it might harm, I shudder to think what would be the real effects of the curse. Albus?" she asked him.

Albus smiled at her not a trace of guilt in his voice or in his posture. "Minerva, the curse would have been disastrous only when it is cast by the wrong persons. I cast it only because I wanted him to be in my sight always. I had hoped never to use it and even if I did it would be only for life threatening reasons and even then I would use it only sparingly and very carefully."

Minerva pasted doubtful look on her face, but she was fuming inside. Used it sparingly indeed! She snorted to herself, when even casting it in the first place was wrong and illegal.

"Did you find the brat and give him a tanning that would make him rethink doing anything like this ever again?" drawled Snape.

"Severus, you do not know how to deal with small children, it is apparent." Came back McGonagall her nose in the air.

"Albus have you found Harry? If you have, then you bring him back here and we will take care of him. He was such a sweet baby, he must be so even now." She finished not acknowledging Snape's incredulous expression and not so nice mutterings about Harry and the word 'sweet', both of them seemed to be used in rather uncharitable and very short exclamations.

Albus felt a headache coming on. He was on Snape's side at present and calling Harry sweet at this point of time made him grit his teeth and use far more uncharitable words than Snape had.

"Minerva, Severus, stop your bickering now. I have searched high and low, but I have not been able to locate Harry. In fact I have spent the entire holidays doing so."

"What!!!!" Minerva had a shocked expression on her face, and even Snape looked mildly interested.

"Yes, if you both have any idea of where to look for him, kindly share it with me. We need him back, Minerva. There are still too many death eaters that are on the loose." He looked sad.

The biggest of them all was sitting right beside her and it was not Severus, was what she was thinking.

"Merlin, Albus! Why did you not call me and even Severus and in fact the other Professors as well. All of us could have searched for Harry."

Albus cringed. To publicize the fact the bloody boy was missing was insanity. Really Minerva was such a straightforward fool at the best of times.

He changed the subject. "Minerva did you know Black is no more. He apparently died in Azkaban a month and a half or so ago." Hoping to turn their attention from searching for Harry.

He was successful. "Good!" said two satisfied voices but he knew Minerva's was because Black had betrayed his friends and Severus's because he was glad to see Black go away for good.

He had been completely unsuccessful in his search for Harry. Peter, Arthur and himself had searched high and low for the boy and he had simply vanished. They had employed even black magic to get access to him, but the magic had rebounded back on them and had left them incapacitated for more than ten days.

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The days and the months rolled by. Soon another summer had arrived and Snape and Minerva had two months to spend with the boy Harry had become. He had progressed to third year curriculum in that one year and he had started learning the dark arts from the day Snape arrived.

Harry had grown tall and had become slim instead of skinny, bordering on the underfed. He was very cheerful, clever, analytical and dangerous. Above all he was powerful, even at ten.

In that one year Albus had no clue to the whereabouts of one Harry James Potter. Perseverant as he was, he did not stop trying.

End of Chapter – 8

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## Chapter – 9

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Snape and McGonagall left Hogwarts on the same day as the students. Albus was glad to see them go as he had become sick of Minerva's concern over Harry, and whenever she would raise it in front of Snape (it was far too often in his opinion) it always ended in an argument that made him unable to work properly for the rest of the day.

Snape and Minerva went straight to Potter castle and were greeted by a shout of glee and a hug. They had not seen Harry since the spring holidays and they were amazed at his growth. He had grown taller and was looking smart.

"So Harry how are you?" asked Minerva as Harry released her and latched on to Snape. Still hanging on to his arm, Harry grinned back at her, "Fine aunty Minerva. And both of you, how have you been? It's been ages you know. Why couldn't you even come over for a day I don't know?" he ended on a plaintive note.

"Harry, I told you this would be our busiest time, as exams and grading go on at full strength. Otherwise do you think, both of us want to spend any more time with Bumbles, than we are doing now?" asked Snape with a smile at Harry's pitifully falsely mournful voice.

Minerva smiled as well patting his arm and turning to greet Sirius and Remus, who had come to greet them as well.

Snape scowled at them, they scowled right back at him and all were satisfied. Harry started giggling at the scowls all the three wore and was told off sternly by Sirius.

"Hey! This is a serious thing, you know. We take pride in scowling and sniping at each other. I'll have you know not to mock at it, young man," and spoilt it by grinning and ruffling Harry's hair.

Snape scowled even more and muttering about silly dogs and infantile pups with no breeding to speak of and went on to his room to refresh himself.

Sirius scowled at that and shooting him a very obscene gesture with his fingers yelled when Minerva smartly smacked him on his head.

“You know Sirius, just because we are not at Hogwarts, you need not think I will not come down on you. I can and might be persuaded to give you a detention right here and tell you to help Severus clean cauldrons, without magic.” She ended with a glare at him, glancing at Harry, “That goes for you too young man. No dirty talking and no rude gestures. You have been warned.”

Both of them gulped audibly and resolved not to do anything to offend her. Sirius consoled himself saying he could always lie low for a few days before irritating Snape. That was one of the joys in his life and he was dammed if he would allow Min-Min to stop it. The problem was she seemed to know exactly what he was thinking and was looking through him and at him rather speculatively.

Snape re-entered at that moment and all of them went to have some tea and biscuits as they brought each other up to date.

Remus and Sirius told them about all they had been teaching Harry and it was quite a lot. He was up to third year now and he was astounding when it came to grasping the theory and beyond comparison when it came to the practical.

Snape decided to teach him the Dark Arts as Albus would use them ruthlessly to press his advantage. If he could place a blood call spell on a baby he was capable of doing quite anything.

Harry was now wearing the Black ring along with the Potter rings. Snape was quite correct when he assumed the two rings to be that of Gryffindor and Slytherin. They would help and make sure Harry could never be placed under any kind of spell without his full consent.

That meant obtaining his consent under the influence of a dark spell or an unforgivable like the imperious would not work on him. Plus the Black ring would also protect him against a majority of dark curses.

The Potter rings were also other things. They served as portkeys that would bring him automatically to the castle if he wanted to escape, any bind or spell would not stop it.

Both the rings were created by all the four founders who weaved their own protections on it. As a result they were formidable protections in themselves.

But Harry would need the knowledge of the dark arts and many other obscure branches of magic if he wanted to defeat this very clever man who followed no rules and no boundaries that he would not cross and no levels he would not stoop to, to achieve what he wanted.

Snape also wanted to teach him potions, Occlumency and Legilimency. Minerva would take him through fourth year syllabus in transfiguration and along with it he would start his classes in Arithmancy and Runes.

So that holidays went by with Harry getting a start on these new subjects.

The easiest was Occlumency and Legilimency as Snape created a mental link with him and taught him to build up the walls. He also told Harry to improvise and make it stronger. Then he would teach him to recognize mental probes and to ward off attacks.

Runes fascinated him. He even went to the extent of researching advanced books on runes for his basic runic problems. He found Arithmancy a bit dry, but realized it would help him in the area of accurate spell casting.

The summer vacation went by swiftly and Snape for the first time decided to come everyday in the evening for an hour or two to continue the classes on the dark arts.

The eyes that were ever present assured Snape the next day with a note as usual, he could do so and they would make sure his absence would not be detected.

As a precaution, though, the eyes had told Snape his ring would burn strongly, if he was needed and Snape should leave everything at that time and rush back to the school.

All too soon it was time to go and Harry urged Minerva to also come by sometimes. Snape and Sirius scowled at each other and the two professors left for yet another year at Hogwarts.

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They left at different times, Snape leaving in the morning before breakfast and Minerva before lunch. Snape had met Albus briefly before going to the dungeons to prepare for the coming year that would start in three days.

Minerva came just before lunch and she went straight to her rooms to refresh herself, before unpacking and going straight to the Great Hall to meet with Albus and the others.

All of them were sitting there and they greeted each other cordially and the usual start of term conversation went around.

After about ten minutes of inane chatter, Minerva turned to ask Albus about Harry. She took great pleasure in asking him time and again as she would have in normal times out of concern, and watching him frown at his failure to get to Harry, for more than a year now.

Well if she had anything to do with it he would never get his filthy hand on the child ever, she thought grimly.

“Albus, you have been trying to get Harry’s whereabouts haven’t you? Have you had any success?” she frowned. “How can a small boy refuse a call like he has?”

Albus would have dearly liked to know as well. In fact he would have given anything to know the answer to that particular query.

For the second time in fifteen months he had spent two months searching high and low for the bloody boy. If he got his hands on him, well first a nice imperius, a truth spell, and he would know how Harry escaped the call and then some of the nice imperius potion that he had prepared, courtesy of knowing Black magic and Harry would be putty in his hands.



He had made a terrible mistake in leaving Harry with his relatives thinking the blood call and the other curse spells he had placed would do the trick.

He clenched his hands in an anger he was not quite able to conceal. Harry was too important for him apart from the Potter vaults. He had a secret not even Arthur or Pettigrew knew about and Harry was central to that. He had to have Harry and he needed Harry as his puppet and he needed Harry as his sacrifice and he needed Harry to save himself.

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Snape was leaving Hogwarts everyday to go to Potter castle to teach Harry the basics of the dark arts and also at the same time gave him an insight into Black magic and how to recognize it and if attacked with, then how to counter it.

He also checked on Harry's Occlumency by probing his mind at different times, without warning. Harry had developed a unique way to prevent intrusion. He had shrouded his mind with a fog that made you flounder about before actually seeing anything. By that time an automatic parcel tongue curse created to attack, would fly towards the alien presence and would forcibly eject him from Harry's mind.

The first time the spell worked, Snape was thrown ten feet away. From the next time he was careful to look out for the curse that was on auto pilot and had to get out quickly when he saw the hex approaching.

But that meant Snape could never peep into Harry's mind and Harry's Occlumency lessons were complete. From then on he was only tested at random times by everyone and invariably at odd times someone would be thrown a few feet away, because they forgot to keep track of his throw out hex as they took to calling it.

Harry was also coming on nicely in his other studies. When you were studying as much as he was it was difficult *not* to learn so much in so short a while. Besides Harry had a purpose that made him serious to a fault.

Above all he wanted to deal with this quickly and get along with his life. Now he had a glimpse of happiness and freedom he wanted all of it, all the time.

For that he had to deal with this Albus, who had killed his parents and forced him into a life of such sadness. Knowing as much as he did now about magic he understood and was horrified by the spells that Snape and the others had removed from him more than a year ago.

To achieve this he had to become stronger than Albus and he had to have an enormous amount of good intent. He had had it drilled and rammed into his head on almost a daily basis about the equation between intent and magic.

Magic he was taught was just that, magic. It was the intent that made it good, bad or evil. To win over anything bad or evil you had to use an enormous amount of the magic that would act as the counter for the bad or evil magical deed.

To win over the evil man you had to defeat him with an intent that was slightly more than the exact opposite of his mental status. It was all in the mind as he was told repeatedly.

The actions originated there and if you would achieve anything at all it would be because you were strong in your mind first, complemented by your body.

Albus, aunty Minerva had told him, was evil as was Voldemort and his death eaters and Wormtail and Arthur Weasley.

To counter all these men as it was in his lot to do so he had to equip himself with enormous knowledge and enormous fair and decent intent and a mind that would not judge and that would not infringe or force itself upon others.

Any other person would have given up by now as they looked at the task before them that was as high as the mountains and as deep as the seas. Not Harry. He had experienced happiness and love after nine years and as far as he was concerned, for the first time in his living memory and he would be damned if he let it all go.

He would fight for himself and for all these loving people who were doing so much for him to win. He would not fail. He could not afford to.

That year went by as well and as summer of the second year approached Harry was starting on NEWT level lessons. He could cast simultaneously and silently. He was on his way to become very proficient in the dark arts. Dueling was another area that exhilarated him.

He loved fighting with all of them though he had to yet beat them on a regular basis. He had defeated Sirius three times and Remus once so far. Snape and Minerva were still trashing him on a daily basis.

At the start of Harry's third summer all of them sat down together to decide on his schooling as he would receive a letter any day to the school.

Snape had written to the voice about it as well and now all of them were in the dining room debating it. Harry himself was silent as he was in two minds. One part of him wanted to go another part of him wanted to stay right here.

All of them were slightly scared as Harry would come under the eyes and control of Albus and none of them could categorically say Harry could take care of it. He was only eleven years after all.

The eyes decide to intervene. They left a note that appeared on the table suddenly shocking everyone and making all of them including Harry to draw his wand, an action that did not go unnoticed and was very much applauded by all.

*Hello everyone,*

*We still think Harry is not fully prepared to deal with Albus. Give him another year and all of us can decide then. In the meantime teach Harry more about spell detection, dark arts and dueling. Severus and Minerva can also sift through the first years and check on the students, their minds and their attitudes.*

*We have other plans for Sirius, Remus and Severus as well, that will take a little time to put in to place. Once that is done the Harry may attend Hogwarts from September next year.*

*Of course we will meet you in person at that time and inform you all about well, everything.*

That effectively put everyone into silence, and then almost immediately an exited chatter broke out as all of them were tremendously exited to meet the lovely Voice and her husband.

That note also decided Harry's agenda for the next year and huge speculation of what was in store for Sirius, Snape and Remus broke out among them. While all of them questioned incessantly, the eyes laughed silently, before blinking out.

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Albus Dumbledore waited and waited for a response from one student that he did not get. Harry's letter had reached its destination, but there was no reply accepting the invitation to attend Hogwarts. Albus could have cried.

Minerva was writing almost everyday asking him if Harry's letter had been received and he was frustrated to the point that he decided to place a dark spell on her for her to keep quiet forever.

This was the third summer in a row he had spent hunting for Harry bloody ..... Potter. Really! The way Harry had vanished was eating into him. He started sending worried and grandfatherly letters once a week asking Harry to return and he promised wonderful things in exchange.

Nothing worked. Harry simply kept away. No replies and no clues as to where he was and how he was managing.

Albus kept on trying all through the year.

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The next year saw Harry completing his NEWTS and at twelve he was a master in the dark arts, mind magic and all the courses Hogwarts had to offer.

He had become tall, he was still thin, and no amount of eating seemed to add to his weight. He had brilliant reflexes of the mind as well as the body and the running he did everyday in the morning helped to keep his body fit and fine.

Snape and Minerva came to Potter castle as usual one day after school broke out and you could actually see the suppressed excitement of all of them as this summer they would meet the Voice.

Harry was also feeling exited as this year he would leave for Hogwarts for the first phase to bring down Albus.

There had been no news from the Voice for quite a while and so they really did not know when she would come. Though it did not stop them speculating about it.

All of them continued their lessons as before and on the thirty first of July, they received a note from the Voice inviting all of them to spend the rest of the holidays with her and her husband.

The excitement was running high as all five young and not so young members of that household couldn't get themselves to sit still as they bantered back and forth about whom it could be and just what was planned for them.

They waited impatiently the next day and at lunch another note with the words '*will activate in one hour, please bring the memories of Lily with you*' written on it.

They had all packed and for another hour they sat around the note doing absolutely nothing. Snape had thought only for a moment before he had packed the memories to take it with him.

They had not shown the memories to Harry as they were scared the memories could be viewed by Albus's probing. Snape did not want to show it till he was satisfied Harry could deal with Albus and keep the

secrets he had so far about Potter castle and all of them training him before Harry would be ready to view these memories.

His argument had been, if Snape and Minerva had been found out they could just floo out of Hogwarts and be in hiding, while Harry's rings would bring him to safety, but if Albus got hold of the memories, that would mean disaster and no one had been able to disagree with that.

At the appointed hour they held on to the note and were whisked away to the beautiful woods that Snape and Remus had retrieved Sirius from.

A second later a very beautiful woman and a handsome man, both of them, very old, came out of the woods and smiled at them.

"Hello. My name is Nicholas Flammel and this is my wife Perenelle and it is we who, I am afraid were so mysterious and troubling all these years."

All of them instinctively bowed. The Flammels' bowed back and led the way into their castle, keying in all of them to the wards.

Soon all of them gathered around in the lovely drawing room of the small castle that was in the middle of the woods. The trees were all as old as, if not older than the Flammels themselves.

There were trees of every kind, old, and huge with their strong branches and leaves dancing to the tunes of the stronger wind that was whistling lovely tunes through them.

There were small lakes here and there and birds of all types were chirping and singing. There were tiny streams flowing alongside with them chattering to them as they went along. They fell gracefully from here to there, with careless abandon, creating small waterfalls that added to the beauty of the streams and the woods.

There were so many phoenixes that were trilling softly, griffins, chimeras and the shocking them were a few basilisks and so many creatures Harry could not identify.

All of them seemed to exist in harmony and were at total peace with themselves and the world around them, not knowing and not caring about the vicious world outside of these woods. The stare of the basilisk did not seem to kill and Snape, as they were led to the house made a mental note to inquire about it when he got a chance.

Harry and the others felt a strange peace descend upon them as they followed the old and yet very powerful couple who could bring the phoenixes and the basilisks along with the chimeras and the griffins to coexist peacefully.

As they settled down in the drawing room that seemed to be an extension of the woods outside in reflecting the peace and harmony right inside the small castle, all of them were seized with a sudden excitement as they looked the couple who were also settling down to talk and lay out everything they knew in the open.

It was Nicholas who started his story and he was prompted by his wife when ever she felt she had to add something more.

“It was many years ago that Albus came to me to learn about alchemy. While his aura did not impress me his eagerness and dedication to the subject did. Nell did warn me she is very intuitive, but I disregarded her advice and that is why I am now doing my utmost to bring down a man I helped to create without knowing at that time and because I was too foolish to listen to Nell.

“As I told you he came to learn alchemy, but slowly he wormed his way into my affections and expressed his awe and spoke of his inspiration to understand the process of creating the Philosopher’s stone.

“I never reacted initially, and I was afraid to teach him anything about the stone, but he kept bringing various theories at regular intervals that wore me down. His enthusiasm and hard work I am afraid, blinded me to the man he was and is, a ruthless man prepared and willing to wait for years before he could pounce and devour.

“He literally waited years before I gave him the process of making the stone, the only clever thing I did was not to give him the whole process, but only a slight variation.

“He was adequately grateful and he has always maintained the same relationship even after he got the information. There are two ways of making the stone.

“While I was foolish to be taken in by his enthusiasm and his dedication, I am eternally grateful to Nell to demand a promise of me, that I am afraid at the time I did not see the need for, that I would not reveal the second type to anyone without her consent. That was the only thing that stopped me from giving him the second method of preparing the stone.

“The first type is known as the basic type and it allows the drinker to live as long as he takes the stone. The drinker of the stone can be killed and is mortal and he will die of natural causes if he stops taking the stone.

“The second type is known as the true type and it bestows immortality and perfect health on the drinker. Both of us have taken the true type and that is why we have lived so long.

“After sometime, Nell dragged me to Knockturn alley one day. We made ourselves invisible, another effect of the stone and she pointed to an ordinary man and to my horror I saw it was Albus. I have the aura sight and it was the same aura that had dogged me for days, pleasing me and making me give the secrets of the stone to him.

“There after I started following him and I found such terrible things about him. He is truly a dark lord. He was Joseph Heifer the assassin who helped Grindelwald with the more insane ideas and it was he who killed Grindelwald in cold blood, took his entire things morphed into a tired, hurt and a victorious Albus and accepted all the laurels.”

He bowed his head choked with emotion as all the others gasped. Albus was the assassin. It was too much to take and Minerva felt a lone tear run down her cheek as she thought of the man she had worshipped.

Perenelle took up the story, “That was not all we found. We found so much more. Riddle who is actually Voldemort,” there were more gasps, “But he studied with me.” Said Minerva wondering just what horrors she would learn today.



“Yes, Minerva, he had very good thoughts for the Wizarding world though they were very twisted as he wanted immense powers for himself. He covered his insatiable desire for power very well though and gathered many pure-blood followers and marked them as his.” Snape blushed in shame.

Perenelle continued as Nicholas stayed with his head bowed and his shoulders shaking, “Albus trained him briefly with Grindelwald and was tremendously interested in him. Killing Grindelwald gave him a taste of power and adoration from the public that was addictive and he wanted more.

“He sought out Riddle as Heifer and put him under a stunner and fed him with an imperious potion and extracted all information about the five horcruxes Riddle had made and the knowledge of the mark he had placed on his followers.

“He then made him drink the deep sleep potion in huge quantities that would make him sleep for more than a year. He then went after the horcruxes and destroyed them and came back and killed Voldemort even as he was sleeping.

“He became Voldemort assuming a fearful potion given form that was different from Riddle’s, but as that form was so fearsome, everyone assumed he had performed many rituals that had changed his body.

“When the prophecy was revealed by Trelawney he knew it was about him and he was desperate to kill you Harry. But there his greed got in his way. He also wanted the treasures of the Potter vault.

“So he decided to kill all the Potters except Harry and place Harry under his control and supervision and proceeded to do the same. Peter killed your grandparents and his golem masquerading as Voldemort killed James while he killed Lily and took you away and placed with your aunt, whom he placed under a mild hating charm so that you would not grow up content and would look upon him as your savior.

“But your mother was too clever for him. She had Severus and if he would not then the goblins take care of you. Otherwise we were planning to kidnap you on your eleventh birthday.

“You may wonder why Harry? Till Severus examined Fawkes we had no idea of the protections placed by Lily and we were not aware of how much she had deduced and prepared. As far as we knew Albus was your legal guardian and he could call you back and we would not be able to do a thing till you turned eleven.

“When you turn eleven, if your parents are not alive, you could assume the position of the Head of your family. So we were eagerly waiting for you to turn eleven. We had planned to train you and help you to defeat that monster we once called a friend.

“For the past two years he has been desperate, as every day you are not found means he is vulnerable to that extent. The prophecy could actually come true.” She finally finished to a devastating silence all around her, shattering the world of Snape, Minerva, Sirius and Remus and breaking Harry’s heart as he listened to his parents’ deaths.

End of Chapter – 9

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## Chapter – 10

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The silence stretched endlessly and for a long time the only things that were heard were the sounds made by the birds and the leaves of the huge trees and the wind outside.

The afternoon turned into evening and evening blended into the night. Minerva was still shaking in the aftermath of her world being turned upside down. She was horrified to put it mildly at the man Albus was. She knew he was not good; but this, she could not reconcile him masquerading as Joseph Heifer and Voldemort; how could she bring herself to accept this.

Snape was shuddering inside and mildly shaking outside. He had just jumped from the frying pan into the fire. He had thought he had exchanged one monster for the other, but at the time he had approached Albus was already Voldemort, in the process of hunting down his horcruxes. He put his head in his arms, willing himself not to cry.

Sirius was crying openly at the shame of it all. The leader of the Light was the bloody Dark, the Light was fighting against. What a joke. He hugged a shocked Harry, trying to comfort Harry who was hearing such unvarnished horrible truths for the first time in his life.

Remus was staring blankly at the wall. He was wondering what Albus was intending to do with him as Albus probably had a reason to allow him into Hogwarts as a werewolf in the first place.

Snape was shaking with the effort he was making in willing himself not to bawl out at the horror his life had suddenly become. To think there was no Light and no Dark, only evil all around that was controlling him so firmly was a theory he could not bring himself to digest.

Suddenly his shoulders were grasped by small but firm hands and he was hugged gently and a Harry's voice comforted him, telling him it would be fine and it would be all right.

Snape in turn hugged the little boy as the tears he was struggling with, fell down his cheeks in shame, shame for joining Voldemort in the first place, shame for going to Albus and shame to find the mess he and the others were now in.

How could no one see through this man and how could he have been allowed to get away with it, get away with all of this. He shuddered for the first time as he thought of magic as a tool that could be used to destroy their world, and it was terrifying.

Nell got up slowly and led them all to dinner, where all of them pushed their food around, hardly eating anything and not doing justice to the steaming hot, delicious food that the elves served.

All of them retired to their beds and tossed and turned about till the first rays of the sun trickled into their room, fighting with the leaves of the trees and their great branches that surrounded the castle.

Birds had already started chirping away happily not knowing the state of sorrow and anger the human inhabitants inside the castle were in.

All of them were up at dawn and walked down to the kitchen for a cup of tea, including Harry who had had a truly horrible night, with strange and terrifying dreams.

He sat in between Snape and Sirius, who had an arm around him and sipped his hot chocolate slowly as he thought of all that Mrs. and Mr. Flammel had said the day before.

Nick as Flammel had asked the others to call him, walked in with his wife and seeing the bitter faces of all of them, smiled.

"Well! Good Morning," he said cheerfully, the anguish of yesterday all forgotten and not caring about the 'what's so good about the morning' looks of the others.

He helped himself generously to tea and biscuits and said softly, "I know we have a lot to do and the task before us seems insurmountable, but remember you are feeling like this for only a day after you knew the facts. I am in part guilty of allowing Albus to grow

so much because of the stone and I could not touch him fearing that he might have created horcruxes.

"I have since realized it was my duty to do what I must and with what resources I have to stop this demon, a demon I also played a part, though unknowingly, to create. Till recently Nell and I were the only ones who were fighting this war alone. Now we have been given additional tools and resources to bring him down.

"I see this as a positive omen and what we should do now is to plan in such a way to bring him down and quickly. Yes, it is a bitter and a terrible awakening we have had about the man we thought as the epitome of the Light and as our savior in our fight against the dark forces, but we must be thankful all of us are in a position to do something about it."

"And do it we shall, Nick, do it we shall or die in the process. Albus should not be let to live for the crimes he committed as Joseph Krieger let alone as Voldemort or as Albus himself." Minerva was livid and it showed in her voice.

All of them taking their tea went to the library, which was so huge but retained the warmth of a cozy room all the same. There Nell seated herself at the head of the square rosewood table that was highly polished and seated up to fifteen people and addressed all of them.

"Well, the first thing would be to cut off Wormtail and Weasley from him, not obviously, but making them unable to function and thereby building a rift in the ranks. The second thing would be to make you safe by arranging for all of us to be with you in the school and also arranging for Harry's safety."

"But, Nell is Harry up to facing Albus and the others? I am not really in favor of Harry going to Hogwarts now. He must be more prepared than he is now to handle Albus on any level. Don't all of you think so as well?" asked Remus who had been rather silent.

Snape frowned as did Sirius. "Yes." Said both of them and then realizing they had just agreed with each other scowled and flipped the finger at each other, simultaneously.

The next second there were a couple of indignant squawking from a couple of chicken, who looked very bemused at the bigness of everything and then the mortification set in with the understanding.

Both of them now pleaded squawking helplessly making Harry yell with laughter and turning puppy eyes at McGonagall begged her to set them all right.

“Ask them if they will behave themselves.” Came back the implacable answer.

“Aunty, how will they answer now? They will be good, don’t worry. They will not want to be like this for ever and ever.” Harry pleaded with her.

“Shame on you both,” said Minerva sternly as she turned back two highly disgusted and mortified wizards, who if looks could kill had already annihilated Minerva more than a few times already.

McGonagall did not even blink. She smirked at both them and told them they deserved it and they had better behave themselves or they find themselves spending more time as chickens than human beings.

They glared and glared till Perenelle intervened with a smile she tried hard to hide. “Well, now we are all happy,” more glares from Snape and Sirius and a nonchalant Perenelle continued on a more serious tone.

“Who are all those, who think Harry should not leave for Hogwarts this year?” she began by asking.

Snape, Sirius and Remus and McGonagall put up their hand. Perenelle was surprised. “Harry, do you think you will be capable to face Albus?”

“No, Mrs. Flammel, I thought I was not counted as it was about me.” Harry explained with a small smile.

“Well, what do you think?” she asked with a smile.

"I don't want to face that man or Hogwarts till I am sure I can handle all that they throw at me on my own." Harry said with a worried frown.

"What if we are all there with you and we will be, you do not have to worry about it Harry," said Perenelle and none of them looked convinced, "You really don't think it wise to send Harry even if all of us are with him?"

"No, you see even if all of us were with him, if Albus manages to get his hands on Harry it would be disastrous," Snape, looked tense and worried as he thought of the repercussions that might arise if Albus ever got a hold on Harry.

All the others murmured their agreement on this thought and Nicholas and Perenelle looked sad at the lack of confidence of the others.

"What I think we should do is to make Harry very proficient in all branches of magic and then let him go to Hogwarts and then let him go to Hogwarts," said Sirius, "and all of us should also find a way to be there with him so that we can help when necessary and also do our own bit at the same time to undermine Albus.

"Maybe all of us could find jobs as professors or even de-age ourselves and go as students to study along-side with Harry." He finished with a deep breath.

"You literally took the words of our mouths, Sirius!" said a beaming Perenelle. "What we had planned was almost exactly that. We had thought out a plan where Severus, Remus and you would take an ancient potion that would de-age you safely without any repercussions and all of you would accompany Harry to Hogwarts.

"Nicholas would provide excellent references and land himself the job of the potions professor and I thought I would come in my animagus form as Harry's familiar, thereby, being with him always and protect him, when necessary.

"We would kill off Severus as we did Sirius and he could start all over again. We had planned for one of you to be in Slytherin so that we could unite the Houses from within as well.

“With two professors and four strong students I thought we could shake the world of Albus Dumbledore.” Finished Perenelle finally, laughing at the gob smacked expressions of the others.

“WOW!!! That’s great!! We will be with Harry all the time” Sirius was thrilled and it showed in his voice.

Snape was stunned as he listened to Perenelle. As she went on talking a strange expression of complete joy filled him. He had heard of the potion that they were planning to give them. It was a powerful one with no side effects and that almost acted as a time turner for the body.

It also had the added advantage of retaining the knowledge gained and the potion was thought to have been lost over the ages. It was a potion invented by the great Slytherin himself.

It would be a new start for him. A chance for a life he could finally live. Live without being under the shadow of a man who was his master and who called the shots all the time and who had the power to destroy him.

He breathed deeply and promised he would make sure not only of Harry’s well being but also help the others to avoid the mistakes he had made.

Remus looked thrilled to go back to his youth and Hogwarts but was still doubtful about the success of the plans. “This is great, Nell. Really! But all of us would be children and you will not be allowed everywhere. If Albus managed to get Harry alone for a little time it would not bode well for us as Harry is still in the learning process.

“While we will have our knowledge intact, we will not have the magical strength to match when we de-age. I still think we should put off Harry going to Hogwarts for a year or two. All of us should train together with Harry and go to Hogwarts maybe in about three years time.

“That will give us the time to prepare and it would put Albus in such a state of anger and frustration, he might make mistakes we can cash in on.”



That set the arguments off; the Flammels on one side and the rest with the exception of Harry grouped to form the other. They argued till lunch, none of them moving out of their seats and Harry a silent spectator, watching and listening to all the others.

They had lunch in the Library, still debating the pros and cons of the whole thing, when the Flammels gave in. They realized that the lack of confidence in the others would only harm them more.

They agreed very reluctantly with the others, about deciding this issue on the eve of Harry's fifteenth birthday and if all went well, Harry would start Hogwarts in his fifth year.

Three days later Sirius, Remus and Snape took the de-aging potion. Snape had gone to Hogwarts with a phoenix and packed all of his very important books and his few personal things. He had left the other belongings, as they were, so as to avoid suspicion.

They then went to Gringotts and informed the goblins of their plans and securing their agreement, they left once again to the beautiful woods, to the Flammels home.

Initially they had thought of Nicholas taking the place of Snape as Snape himself, with a lot of polyjuice and a little natural morphing. But the absence of the dark mark would immediately make Albus suspicious and it was dropped at once.

Snape was quite happy to kill himself off as he had not had a spectacular life so far and with a new identity would come a new life, new opportunities and new hope. Snape was not a fool to turn it down.

Snape had then written a letter to Albus and McGonagall, so that if Albus wanted to verify Snape's trip McGonagall would provide the letter she had received. In the letter he had told them about going to the forests of Romania to search for prized herbs supposedly found there to help in healing dark spells, that were fatal when cast.

A week later Albus would get a letter saying Snape had been killed in the forests by werewolves. Nicholas would somehow get into Hogwarts and prepare the grounds for the others to come in three years. They had carefully aligned Snape's trip with the full moon.

Sirius and Remus were thrilled as well. They would be going back to a period where they had been the happiest.

While this time there would be no James, that thought almost made Sirius and Remus cry out as they looked at each other lost in the memories of the past, there would also be no Pettigrew and Sirius snarled as he thought of what he would do if the bloody rat ever came near Harry.

Sirius almost drooled at the glorious scene in his mind as he chewed Wormtail and Remus drooled independently as he had similar thoughts about eating a rat during the full moon.

Both of them concluded separately that what had happened to James would NOT happen to Harry. Not when they were alive.

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Albus was sitting in his home sipping tea and breaking his head about how to find the blasted boy who was at this time gone for the third summer in a row. He had not attended Hogwarts for his first year and there seemed no guarantee he would come this year and be Albus's sacrificial lamb obediently.

Snape's letter came and he barely glanced at it. Arthur and Peter were with him trying all avenues and going to really ridiculous lengths to search for Harry. In ordinary times Albus would have laughed at Arthur and Peter checking on the children of known wizards and witches in the hope, Harry would be one of them, in disguise or under the polyjuice.

How could a boy who did not know magic existed, use the polyjuice or disguise himself so that *Albus* could not find him? It was silly to put it mildly, in fact Arthur had checked all his children as well. That would have been hilarious a couple of years ago.

Today he was reduced to hoping one of them would really be Harry and solve all his problems. The Prophecy was beginning to scare him. Prophecies, he knew were involuntary sayings that fate released from time to time to help and warn her people and they always turned out to be true and always happened.

The fact a boy was out there somewhere who was destined to kill him, petrified him. To think he could have killed him the same night he had killed his parents, made Albus really bang his head and give himself a massive headache on top of his other problems.

And he had allowed Harry to live, marking him as the Prophecy itself indicated, creating a link to control his mind later, when he came to school as he had thought himself invincible at the time. He had thought he could defeat the boy and fulfill the Prophecy and get the Potter vaults.

He banged his head a little more ignoring the pain the first round of banging had given him and received a headache that would stay for three days even with healing potions.

He had allowed his avarice and greediness to own the Potter vaults to let the boy live thinking he had full control over Harry and the situation.

Now he had lost control over both and he did not know what to do. He was helpless till Harry came of his own accord. Harry was being helped. Of that there was no doubt. Otherwise, magic or muggle world, he could not have refused the blood call. Who? And how? Were the questions that had burned into his brain in the last three years and created a mark of its own in his head.

As they were searching, this year county by county, a letter came from an official in the Romanian Ministry. Snape had been attacked and killed by werewolves and there was not much left to send the body back home and they were very sorry.

Peter had shuddered at that. He knew from experience how terrifying they could be and sympathised with Snape for just a minute. Arthur too was horrified by the means of death, though he had no sympathy for Snape as he did not know him.

Albus was disturbed by this. Nothing seemed to be going right these days. Snape was essential for him to provide coordination and a communication link between Voldemort and the Order. He was in the right position to give the Order the information Albus would want to

receive from Voldemort when Voldemort would be revived in a glorious and a spectacular manner.

He had it all planned out. Harry and Voldemort would keep meeting at regular intervals and Harry would keep surviving till he reached his seventeenth birthday.

Albus would then get control of his vaults and afterwards the mother of all fights would occur and poor, poor Harry would sacrifice himself for the sake of the wizarding world and also as a bonus for the simple, foolish people, Voldemort would also die and he, Albus would be safe, rich and happy.

Now Snape was dead and that meant one more problem on his hands and this was a problem he could not discuss with Peter or Arthur as they did not know about Albus and Voldemort being the same person these days.

If he had to correct them about this, he would also have to tell them that the Prophecy was about him and Harry, not Voldemort. He was not prepared to do this as this would put him in a very vulnerable position with Peter and Arthur, for now they sensed only his anger. If they knew, they would know of his fear and being weak in front of anyone was the one thing Albus wanted to avoid at all costs.

He kept trying because he could not afford to lose hope or Harry.

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Snape, Sirius and Remus de-aged successfully and preened at themselves in the mirror and mocked at the others when they saw each other. Remus was de-aged a little more to go to the middle of his eighth year. It was a few months later that he had been bitten. So now he was free and this time if he would stay safe, then he would grow without transforming into a wolf every month.

Remus had cried when Perenelle had suggested it and hugged her and declared he owed his life to her and would do anything to repay this blessing he was receiving from her. Perenelle had been touched to see the quiet and gentle man cry so openly in front of all the others

and had hugged him back, saying she was glad to do something to help him, if only to de-age him for a few years more.

Snape had not said a word mocking Remus as he knew that meant as much as the removal of the mark meant to him. The lack being owned by Albus both as Albus and as Voldemort had been truly terrifying to Snape, who knew Albus would destroy his morals, his values and his soul before killing him off.

Remus would begin his first year as a studious boy and move around the school in relative anonymity and snoop around for the others and carry out some of their more outrageous and dubious plans.

Harry was thrilled to see all of them his age and he fell down laughing on the ground as he saw them coming down the first time. All of them had become shorter by several inches and looked so young and changed, it looked funny to Harry.

That made Remus smile at his fun, Sirius raise rather self conscious eyebrows, before giggling and then stopping, horrified at the sound and at Snape snickering at him. Snape had been scowling magnificently at Harry till then. It seemed not even de-aging would be able to separate Snape and his scowl.

The only thing that would apparently turn it into a snigger was an embarrassment suffered by Sirius and Remus. Then Snape was all smiles, which was terrifying in itself.

All three of them scowled at each other and were about to match their words with the highly deprecating looks they wore, when a noise stopped them so hurriedly, turning their faces straight and their mouths shut tightly.

It was McGonagall clearing her throat. "Well boys, now all of you are twelve and eight years old respectively, please remember you will be treated like any one who is twelve and eight years old.

"That means unless all of you follow the rules of good language, decent manners and no fighting there will be repercussions. The consequences of doing the aforementioned would result in very nasty

detentions for those indulging in such acts. I would personally advise you against it.”

“**Outrageous!!!!**” yelled Sirius and then found he could not speak at all. He glared at McGonagall and then smiled as she also applied her ability to use the *silencio* on Snape.

Snape had hissed rather than shout as he had always felt hissing sounded more deadly and frightening than plain yelling. “Minerva, might I remind you I am a professor and I am the one responsible for bringing all of you,” what would have been Snape’s argument further was not known as Snape’s lips were moving but there was no sound. He looked furious.

Minerva did not even blink. “My dear Severus, while I accept all that, now you will listen to me as you are only twelve years old *now*. Unless all of you pull up your socks and get down to work, to bury your differences and become friends Albus would come to know in a second who all of you are.”

All of them looked slightly shamefaced at that. What she said made a lot of sense. They agreed, but very reluctantly and then it was all back to business.

Nicholas and Perenelle invited all of them to stay with them during the week and offered to go with them to Potter castle for the week-ends. Once Nicholas was accepted into Hogwarts, then Perenelle would train them and be with them and Nicholas and Minerva would visit with them whenever they could.

“Who is Fawkes?” asked Snape. It was question that had confused and bothered him so much.

Nicholas smiled. “Fawkes is one of the many phoenixes that are here. I get the information from him as I share a mind link with him and most of the other birds and animals here and as I can teleport, that means sliding through the wards Harry, I come to Hogwarts whenever there is something I want to check on.

“Now all of these gifts I have are intent based and I am allowed to use it only because I need no our world needs to stop Albus. Otherwise,

these gifts will destroy me themselves as breaking wards are actually breaking into the privacy of the other.” He said seriously.

“How will you know, sir?” asked Harry deeply impressed by what he was hearing.

“Intent magic is a subject by itself. When you study it you will understand the principles on which it works, Harry. Magic as you have had it beaten into you is neither good nor bad. It is the intent that makes it so. But what determines intent? Not our rules or even our personal needs or the so called rules of right and wrong. What determines Light magic and what constitute Dark magic are the situation and the circumstance.

“In one situation a spell you used would be Light magic in another the same spell would classify as Dark because of the intent to do harm with the curse.” He smiled at the earnest boy, no boys as all of them were listening intently.

“Then if you use magic indiscriminately what happens?” asked Sirius who was listening, fascinated.

“Simple. You face the repercussions of your actions Sirius, as you will in all circumstances in your life. You are punished with detention if you do what you ought not to; you are rewarded by points and later on by prefect ship if you are the ideal student. Magic makes you stronger if the intent is good and weakens you if the intent is bad and if you don’t reform it will ultimately destroy you.

“So keep the intent right, then the mind is clean, the body healthy and you win easily.” Nicholas smiled at the serious faces that were listening to him with so much concentration and clapped his hands. “The sermon is over, to be continued later. Now let us draw up schedules and get to work. I will teach you all I know and so will Nell, only make sure,”

“Your intent’s good.” All of them chorused together, making everyone laugh.

End of Chapter – 10

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## Chapter – 11

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They drew up a tight schedule that would give them only Sunday to call their own. All the other six days were tough days and hard working days. Now that Harry was comfortable at working at NEWT level, they decided to start advanced runes, parcel magic and potions, which would be studied together, wandless magic, and intent and will magic to studied together.

Saturday would be devoted to the Dark Arts. Even McGonagall would study with them in the holidays and after school started she would continue with Nicholas there.

The others would join in as well as they too were well above NEWTS. But they had the strength of young boys and it would take time for them to match their magic with their knowledge.

They decided to start at five in the morning and devote the mornings to theory and the afternoons to the practical. They would do only one subject per day. They would then incorporate the study into the common branches of magic normally taught.

“Like for example,” said Nicholas Flammel on the day they started their regime, “all of you are going to learn runes today. So you will try and apply the magic in the runes in your normal branches of magic like warding, healing, protecting and shielding and dueling and potions.”

“How?” asked Harry, deeply interested as were the others. They were in the Flammels home and all of them were in the Library using that as their classroom for theory and they decided to use the dueling room in the dungeons for the practical.

“Well,” said a smiling Nicholas looking at Harry’s enthusiasm, “all of you know the basics and perhaps a little bit more of the ancient runes that holds so much power. Now while each rune holds power in itself, a combination of the runes joined with either the dark arts or potions or parcel magic would make the spell practically indestructible.

This is what all of you will be learning in the days to come. Like with runes you will apply the same rules with say parcel magic and combine it with other subjects. In short you will be learning combination magic and you will learn to do all this with and without a wand.”

They studied diligently, even Sirius as they had a mission to fulfill, a debt to repay, a revenge to extract. They would have fun when they left for Hogwarts, now was the time for studying.

All of them were waiting for Friday for the intent and will magic class. While all of them could do a decent amount of wandless magic before, they had no idea of the depths of wandless magic that they were now learning.

It was the magic of the old, the magic of their forefathers who could do wandless magic effortlessly. All of them were trying very hard in this class as if they lost their wands they would not be at a disadvantage.

But none of them had any clue about intent magic and will magic, except the fact that magic was classified as Light and dark by intent.

Both Nicholas and Perenelle walked into the Library that day and laughed at the eager faces around them, including that of McGonagall.

“Good morning everyone,” and receiving their greetings in return he said, “You know, all of you are going to be disappointed. For, I am going to finish the lecture in just one minute. The theory is ridiculously simple. It is the practical that will be a huge obstacle to cross.

I have already told you about intent magic. How it is the circumstance and the situation determines the intent and asks the magic to be performed. Now will magic is an extension of this. There are no incantations to memorize no theory to by-heart and understand, no notes to write and prepare.

There is intent and your strength of mind. Your will. Use it to create the magic. For example if I want to lift you Harry, I use my desire to do a certain job and clear my mind so that my intent is correct and I

do not want to harm you. I do not use any spell or my wand. I use my mind and its strength and demand it to make my magic lift you high.”

Harry found himself floating gently in the air. Nicholas had not even lifted his hand. He had been speaking and Harry had been slowly rising in the air.

“Now Harry, try and use your magic to counter mine and make yourself descend. Remember no spells and no wand. Throw your wand to Nell. Come on now.” He said gently.

Harry tried and tried and after fifteen minutes he was still floating without success, and now he was joined in the air by the others including McGonagall and the shocking thing was all of them were held there by only Nicholas.

All of them tried everything and another fifteen minutes later they found themselves on the ground let down gently by Nicholas who had not even broken into a sweat and looked as if he could have kept all of them floating in the air for another two hours at the least.

“Now I have placed this feather in front of each of you. You will make it float in the air without using your hand, your wand and any incantation to lift it. This is your exercise for the day.”

At the end of the day none of them were successful in even turning the feather on its other side. All of them were very disappointed and totally drained. The elves brought them replenishing potions that they took gratefully and silently sat through dinner that they ate and going to their rooms they slept as if they had not slept for the last ten days.

The next day five highly disillusioned people stumbled into the kitchen yawning, the tiredness of the day before not quite gone.

“How come none of us were able to even turn the damn feather? We were worse than my first year class, honestly.” Said McGonagall disgustedly.

“My dear Minerva, you really did not expect to undo the effects of the magic that you have been doing all your life with the help of a wand

and incantations in one day did you? You need so much of practice, but once you perfect it the world is yours.

“Only keep your mind and intent on this side of the line. You can do anything. Anything. That is why it is so difficult and almost unattainable. Even if one of you succeeds it would be a tremendous thing.”

“I am going to practice this for a little while everyday. Even if I forget my spells or have my wand taken off and my hands tied, I can still do damage with this.” Said Harry determination written all over him. Snape nodded his head as well.

The other two looked glum, as Sirius was dismayed by the amount of work this needed and Remus because it would be harder for him as he was smaller than all of them.

That ended the first week of their new studies and that week set the tone for the rest of the holidays.

A week later, Nicholas received a letter from Albus for attending the interview for the post of Potions Professor, scheduled for two days later.

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He walked briskly to the gates and went inside the school and asking the portraits walked up to the Headmaster's office. He waited there for a while before he was escorted by Flich. As the gargoyle opened he saw Arthur Weasley coming out with a rat in his hand and a smile on his face.

He had seen the rat as Ron's pet the year before and his mind began to work furiously. Arthur smiled at him and politely requested him to go up and then inside.

Nicholas went inside and greeted Albus formally and pleasantly. He sat down opposite Albus and waited for him to start questioning. The next second he stood up.

"I had thought better of you Headmaster. I do not allow anyone to peep into my mind without permission. If you had wanted to see what I am made up of you only had to ask." He said sternly, preparing to leave.

"Please, Mr. er, I am afraid I have forgotten your name."

"Williams. James Williams."

"I am very sorry Mr. Williams. Usually I never do peep into anybody's mind, but lately, there have been suspicious disappearances and happenings. I merely wanted to protect the school and her students. May I see into your mind as I do not know you and I do not think you were a student here."

"No I was home schooled, Professor. I have my OWLS and NEWTS in all the basic courses, but it is Potions that inspire me and thrill me. I love to experiment and frankly I am here only because of the well known Potions Lab and excellently stocked ingredients.

"Of course I also hope to find a student who might be worthy enough to teach. I will remove my Occlumency shields and you may check my integrity and honesty."

Nicholas waited patiently till Albus scrutinized his memories and then smiled back at Albus as Albus nodded his head smiling at Nicholas.

"I have to apologize once again Mr. Williams," he began only to be interrupted by Nicholas who asked him to call him James. They spent almost an hour happily discussing various aspects of magic and the wizarding world at large and Albus offered him the post of the Potions Professor.

He suddenly got another idea and looked at Nicholas, "James, what is your opinion about Slytherin?"

Nicholas shrugged carelessly. "I really do not know Headmaster. Of course I have heard a lot of the infamous rivalry between Slytherin and Gryffindor. Who hasn't?"

Albus looked at him calculatingly. Williams did not seem to care one way or the other. Maybe this could help Slytherin to become bold and if Williams was lax, the students could really indulge in a lot of other activities and join Voldemort when he resurrected, and have no problem inside the school.

Also no one was interested to assume responsibility as Head of House of Slytherin as no one in the school felt they could cope with its members who did not bow down to authority very easily.

“What would you say if I offered you the position of the Head of Slytherin House? Would you be able to take up the challenge as that House has the most unfavorable reputation and I feel it rather sad about it as I feel unable to help? Perhaps a neutral Head of House is just what is needed to make the others see that House in a better Light.”

Nicholas took his time to answer, choosing his words carefully. This was a chance he had never planned for and had thought Albus would never appoint a new candidate for this very important position and he knew he could work wonders with the House if only he had control over it.

“Well, this is most unexpected Headmaster. I really don’t know if I have the commitment to do justice to such an important post. And what if it will distract me from my Potions? That is after all my primary duty. And to top it all, that House does not enjoy a very good reputation.”

“Are you a pure blood James?” and seeing Nicholas nod his head affirmatively, “good, because that one thing is enough for you to be accepted by the members of that House? Yes, that House has a bad reputation, but a neutral man like you with no prejudices is what that House will need. You maybe rest assured you will have a lot of time for your Potions as well.”

Nicholas made a show of hesitating and looked so dubious that Albus practically assured him a free run of the House.

“You may be rest assured that you will have a free hand in dealing with the House. Do not worry, James. You will be able to manage.”

Nicholas finally after a bit more persuasion agreed reluctantly and they said their goodbyes with Nicholas promising to come a week before start of term and start his duties.

Nicholas left the school and apparated to his home, and literally danced his way inside. All the others were in the Library studying and they looked up in astonishment and then laughed as one, as he skipped inside.

"I have no need to ask if you have been appointed. Your behavior makes it apparent it is all good news." Perenelle was laughing.

"Yes, and it is more than that, Nell. I have also been appointed as Head of Slytherin House. That is the Good News. We could do so much."

The next hour went by, in discussing all the things that they could do with the power that Nicholas would wield as Head of Slytherin.

Then Nicholas told Sirius and Remus about the rat he had seen with Arthur and summoning a pensieve he showed them the rat in question. Sirius and Remus jumped up in anger snarling at the rat confirming it to be Peter.

Nicholas told them he had seen that rat as the pet of Ron Weasley and before that as Percy Weasley's pet. It would be very easy to capture the rat and even easier to spread misinformation to Albus through him. That was one obstacle almost taken care of.

The summer went by with none of them advancing even a little bit more than their first class in intent and will magic. But the level of concentration they applied to that class increased their concentration and alertness levels to new heights and helped them in understanding and performing their other subjects better.

The other subjects were going very well and Remus had cried when the day he had been bitten went safely by and that full moon he did not transform, having got rid of the curse for good. He had changed from a quiet boy who was just grateful that someone was good enough to speak to the likes of him, to a boy who was boisterous, hardworking, and happy and generally enjoying himself to the hilt.

McGonagall and Nicholas went off to Hogwarts at the end of the summer. There Minerva was introduced to Professor Williams and both of them got on like a house on fire. He was introduced as the new Potions Professor and Head of Slytherin House.

He did not receive any acknowledgement from the House he was to head but an ovation from the rest who were tremendously glad they no longer needed to suffer Snape's wrath in class.

Nicholas during the year earned the respect of the students and the Professors alike. He also checked on the pet rat of Ronald Weasley and found it to be Peter and then left him strictly alone. This year also saw the last of the Weasleys joining Hogwarts. Ginny Weasley the last child and only daughter of the family were sorted into Gryffindor.

He scanned all the students continually and found all of them to be fine and without any trace of dark magic or any imperious curse or potion affecting them. He gave special attention to Ron and Ginny as he knew the moment Harry came they would be pushed towards him by Albus and encouraged by their father.

That winter holidays he met the wife of Arthur Weasley for the first time and felt saddened as he scanned her aura. Her aura was bright, happy, clean and good. Totally in contrast with her husband's. She was also very much in love with him and Nicholas knew she would be in for a rude awakening and a terrible heart break.

The year went off very well and soon it was time for the summer vacations to start and Minerva and Nicholas went back to the woods to the Flammels home.

Harry greeted them with a happy yell saying he had after a year managed to lift the feather half a foot in the air for a minute. Nicholas was thrilled as he now knew the sky was the limit for this boy as he would be able to survive even if he was in a very tight situation, as the sheer will and intent would save him.

He had also been blessed with the sight that his mother had had and Perenelle took his classes on this, sharpening his skills and teaching him about various combinations and fusions of various colors.



The others were still not able to do this and they just had to keep on trying. That summer went on with classes after classes, and now with so much of knowledge under their belt, taking the week-end off, instead of only Sundays.

The next two years passed on much in the same way, with Harry and the others now making daring forays into the wizarding world. Harry was taken to Diagon Alley, Hogsmeade, and the Ministry and also to the muggle world. He spent his fourteenth year traveling around the country and learning about wizarding law and also muggle laws.

That summer would be the last summer for Harry before he would leave for Hogwarts for the first time, joining in his fifth year. Snape and Sirius would also join him in his fifth year and Remus would go normally as a first year, thereby avoiding speculation and suspicion.

All of them were now very proficient in almost all the main branches of magic, having studied them day and night for the last so many years. Harry had come by leaps and bounds in his will and intent magic and the only other person to be able to do this to a smaller extent was Snape, much to the disgust of Sirius, who along with Remus was still turning the feather on its side without success.

A friendship of sorts had sprung up among Snape, Sirius and Lupin. While they sniped, sneered and mocked each other, they would if necessary, fight to the death defending the other, though they would never acknowledge it or speak about it.

Their common ground was Harry and all of them met at that point unanimously and buried all their differences there. Harry himself had the happiest years of his life after the other three had de-aged themselves and become his age. He loved Sirius and Remus and was fiercely protective of the two last links with his parents.

He would never tire of hearing about his father, the way they had become animagus, a feat they still had to do here, and the way they roamed the nights of the full moon and the pranks they played. He loved to hear of his brilliant mother who had planned so much in advance to save him and provide him with such a good life.

He had cried long and hard for the first time in his life as he saw the memories of his mother and on that day swore on her memory, that her sacrifice would never go in vain and the deaths of his parents and grandparents would be avenged. He had thrown himself into his studies even more after that not wanting to fail her.

Sirius, Remus and even Snape and the Flammels showed him memories of his parents and grandparents and the way his mother and father had fought in school and their wedding day, the day he was born and how much he had been loved in the short time they had had with him. Harry had healed then.

But it was with Snape he had enforced a bond so deep it was amazing. He had instinctively known Sirius and Remus did not like Snape very much and he had sided with Snape during arguments, even when Snape had rebuffed him. He had not minded as he knew they were only wounded words, having been in Snape's place dozens of times when he was with the Dursleys.

Slowly Snape had come down from a rather condescending adult and child relationship and they had progressed to a very real friendship and that made them bond as brothers. If Harry was fiercely protective of Sirius and Remus, he would kill for Snape and he knew Snape would do that and more for him.

He learnt Snape's home life had been bad and while Harry had the security of being loved and cared for, Snape had no one except a weak mother, who loved him, but was busy defending herself from a cruel and insensitive husband to go out of her way to protect him. Slytherin treated him badly as he had no name worth knowing, no money and was not a pure blood.

And after Hogwarts Harry knew how his life turned out and was determined this time Snape had a best friend and Harry would care to see he was not bullied and he knew Snape would return the favor.

Sirius and Remus had not liked it and Sirius especially had been very vocal and vociferous, but Harry had stayed put and had been very stubborn about this. As he also controlled Snape and did not allow him to harass Sirius and Remus, they had to swallow their opinions and had gradually accepted it.

Now in the last summer before school all the four knew each other inside out and were ready to take on the world. They had purchased their books and robes and other necessities and were ready for Hogwarts and all that it might bring.

They spent the last two months on animagus transformations, where to no one's surprise Remus was a wolf, Snape was a huge falcon, he was shocked, Sirius was a grim and he had become very anxious as he was scared Peter might find him out, but was reassured by Nicholas that more than one person could become a particular animal and it was not so out of the ordinary.

Harry had transformed into two creatures. One was a spectacular brown eagle and the other was a lovely fire phoenix that was blue and green in color. By the end of the holidays all of them were able to transform at will.

All of them had gone to Diagon Alley to get their pets. Harry and Snape got a snake and a beautiful phoenix that had simply flown to Harry and had refused to budge. She was a combination of orange, green, blue and gold that was beautiful. Sirius had a massive eagle that seemed to love him at sight and Remus had got a snowy white owl he called Hedwig. Snape's snake was called Rees, Harry had snorted at that and Sirius had mocked at him.

Sirius had called his eagle Archie, and that had had Snape at his sarcastic best and had quite avenged himself for the fun he had endured for Rees.

Harry had called his phoenix Lily and all of them left Diagon Alley very happy.

Harry had received his letter for the Fifth year and had written to accept. Snape and Sirius were also ready as they were transferring from a small school far in the North that had recently closed and had their letters and other information all perfect.

They along with six others would join Hogwarts as their school had closed as the authorities could not run it efficiently. As it was in the papers and other students would be attending as well, though in the lower classes, Albus would not make much of it.

The North High as the school was called took students only till Owl year and had in recent years had not been able to increase admissions to a level that would be possible to run it properly. So it had closed down. It would have closed the year before but a mysterious benefactor had provided the funds for one more year. So the school had run for a year more.

Nicholas had been that person, who had provided the funds as it would mean an entry without problems for Sirius and Snape. This way all of them could arrive separately and make 'friends' on the train.

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Albus had just received the acceptance letter that Harry had sent and was thrilled. Harry was coming to Hogwarts and finally he would be under his thumb. Well he would make sure this time the boy would not leave his side till he was seventeen and then Albus would send him away permanently.

He informed Minerva that Harry had finally responded to his letters and Minerva showed her happiness as well and hoped Harry was fine and he had not suffered the after effects of the blood call.

Albus smiled as he thought of the potions and spells he was going to subject Harry to and his eyes shone with sheer gladness as he got up to prepare.

He got Arthur and Peter together and informed them and watched their relieved and happy expressions. Feeling very confident and his feelings content as they had been almost eight years ago, he told Peter to keep a watch on Harry and report to him on a daily basis. Arthur could not be brought in just now; he would be used later, if needed.

Voldemort would come back this year, Albus decided and he would make a grand entrance at the end of the triwizard tournament that was to be held in Hogwarts this year.

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The four of them got ready on the first of September and apparated to Kings Cross and waited to board the train to Hogwarts. Harry was the last and he apparated directly in to the train and waited for the others. They came and slowly took their seats. Snape was sitting next to Harry and Sirius opposite him.

Remus had become Richard Brent; Snape had taken the name of Salazar Zack and Sirius had already had chosen David Kent and he kept the same name as no one knew or cared about David Kent.

They had also forged a mind link with each other. Snape had flatly refused to link anything with Sirius or Remus, so Harry and Snape had a link and Sirius and Remus had one. The rings that the Flammels had given them were also modified so that if they wanted to talk with those with whom they did not share a link the rings would help.

The rings would warm up and when held to the ear would mind speak what the other wanted to communicate. Minerva was also given a red ring and the Flammels also included themselves in this so that they could warn if necessary or chat to all the others once in a while.

Remus had already gone to the first year's compartment and was mingling with the other new students there. Harry, Snape and Sirius were waiting in an empty compartment for a while before the door opened and a tall man with a flowing white beard and twinkling blue eyes stepped in.

Behind him was a tall gangly boy with red hair and a lot of freckles, a girl with bushy hair and intelligent brown eyes and another stunning girl with red hair and freckles on her face that told the onlooker she was in some way related to the tall red haired boy.

End of Chapter – 11

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## Chapter – 12

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Albus had been waiting since morning and as the first students started to arrive at Kings Cross, his eagerness and anxiety grew in direct proportions to the number of students that seemed to be pouring in. As the time went by, however, and there was no Harry to be seen, his eagerness slowly diminished and his anxiety and anger started rising.

As he scanned the now almost empty platform, he knew there were only two things that could have happened. One Harry had not turned up and he hoped like there was no tomorrow that was not the case. After Harry's acceptance letter he had enjoyed a peace that had been largely absent from his life since the day Harry had been missing.

The other was he had somehow missed Harry and that did not bode well as an omen for him. But nevertheless out of the two he would take the latter even if it meant his powers of observation was on the wane.

He had had standing with him, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger whom he had told in his grandfatherly tones to befriend the Boy-who-Lived as he was coming to the school for the first time and both of them had nodded wide eyed, exited and thrilled to be selected for this honor.

Ginny had also been with them curious about the Boy-who-Lived, about whom she had had many fantasies when she was younger. She too stayed behind and waited with the Headmaster.

He went into the train with the other three smiling on the outside and seething inside about the fact that he seemed to have missed Harry somehow and they would search the train before concluding Harry had not come this year as well.

They peeked into a dozen compartments, before, about five compartments to the end they found him sitting with two other students chatting away quietly. The other two students seemed new

and Albus concluded they must have been from the unfortunate school that had closed a little while ago.

Harry looked very good, Albus concluded very bitterly. Very, very good. He was tall and thin, with black hair falling about just like James's had and beautiful green eyes that were wide, big and lovely.

He looked up in the middle of a discussion about Quidditch with the other two. He frowned a little and then looked enquiringly at Albus and the others standing behind the Headmaster with ill concealed curiosity.

"Harry?" Albus asked softly, his blue eyes gleaming as he caught sight of the prey that had been eluding him for so long. For the life of him he could not hide the eagerness or bring out the grandfatherly twinkle as he looked at the blasted boy who had given him so much trouble.

The bloody boy simply nodded his head. "Welcome to Hogwarts, Harry. I am the Headmaster Albus Dumbledore. We will speak once we get to school. Are these your friends?"

The taller boy answered him, "Hey! You are the Boy-who-Lived. You never told us," he exclaimed even as the other slightly shorter boy nodded his head vigorously. "Hello Sir, we are from the North High. I am David Kent and this is my classmate Salazar Zack."

Albus smiled at them and gesturing for Ron, Hermione and Ginny to get inside, he left. He did not leave the train and casting an invisible charm around him, prepared to stand by the door for the rest of the journey.

"Hello," said Hermione once the door had been shut and was about to ask a barrage of questions, when a firm hand was placed on her mouth by Ginny. "Give it a break." And ignoring the glare she turned to Harry and the others and smiled. "Welcome to Hogwarts. I am Ginny Weasley, this is my brother Ron and this is our friend Hermione Granger. We know who you all are of course as we just heard you say to the Headmaster."

Harry and the others smiled and Harry looking at all of them scanned their auras. He found it clean, bright and good just as Nicholas had said and Harry relaxed. By the time the train reached Hogwarts they were chattering away like a house on fire, all of them except Snape who kept close to Harry and did not say much.

"Where had you been all this while?" this was Hermione as Ron and Ginny groaned. Hermione blushed as she heard the groan but looked expectantly at Harry.

"In my home. I was there till this year when I decided to come to Hogwarts to take my OWLS. Otherwise I would not have come." He said carelessly.

"But your lessons," sputtered Hermione. "How can you cope up with all the four years of work?"

'Oh! But I am prepared. Not to worry.' And changed the subject, to Quidditch, which all the boys and one girl joined eagerly and soon they were discussing their favorite teams.

Hermione was stunned that someone could take their studies so casually, and was astonished by his careless remarks. But his eyes were intelligent and she sensed an aura of power around him and knew there was more to the explanation he had given.

She took out her ancient runes book and was soon immersed in it, having no interest in Quidditch. She did look up however and joined in as Ron and Ginny told the new comers about Hogwarts, the different Houses and the point system and the various subjects.

"There was an awful man who was our Potions Professor. His name was Snape and he taught us in our first year." Ron shuddered. "But he died." Before he could say something more he was cut off by Hermione.

"Yes he was rather nasty to the Gryffindors, but then he was a Slytherin Head of House. That House is always discriminated against Harry, don't listen to Ron on this," ignoring Ron's sulks and mutterings she continued, "he was very strict and took off points very



quickly and he used to mock us but he was a fantastic Professor who knew his stuff, like Professor Williams.”

“What happened to this Snape guy?” asked Sirius.

“Well, he was killed by werewolves. Very sad and such a horrible way to go.” All of them shuddered as one, even Ron who added, “But he was a greasy git Harry, whatever Hermione says.” He said looking at Hermione defiantly.

Hermione was unperturbed. “That Ron is because he made you clean bed pans in the infirmary without magic and for the explosion you caused that could have killed you, you more than deserved it.”

That started off the arguments on the Snape was a greasy git and nasty on one side and yes he was a greasy git and nasty but you deserved his punishments on the other.

Harry and Sirius were very amused by this as Snape sat scowling at Ron and if only he could have, he would have condemned Ron to wash bed pans without magic for the rest of his life.

There had been a brief moment of acute tension when Sirius had seen Ron’s pet rat that was called Scabbers. Harry teased him by telling him he should not be scared of a rat for heaven’s sake and then it was blown over.

Snape’ snake had been carefully kept out of sight till they would reach Hogwarts and Harry’s phoenix and Sirius’s eagle were flying to Hogwarts while Remus had his pet with him like any first year old.

The time passed pleasantly and soon it was time to change into their robes and get down. Harry and the others were ready and then the train stopped slowly and all of them clambered down.

They got into the boats with Remus coming with them to make for four to a boat and silently went past the water curtain to the massive doors that would be opened by McGonagall.

She received the students with a terse thank you from Hagrid and looked at the four of them for a second and then made her usual welcome speech.

She led the students to the Great Hall and setting the stool began to call them one by one. Remus was the first to be sorted by the hat, which had been told in advance by Nicholas about the four of them. The hat belonged to Gryffindor and its first loyalty was to the family of Gryffindor and the school rather than any Headmaster.

Remus was sorted into Gryffindor. He scrambled away to sit with the other first years. Sirius went first after the first years and three other second year North High students had been sorted into Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff. He had hardly sat for a minute when the hat spoke to him.

"I am going to place you in Slytherin, Sirius, as I believe you can do the maximum good there by befriending the other pure blood students and unite the Houses. Snape is not right for this job as he has no patience and too many issues within him to do any good. Make good friends with Draco Malfoy. You will sway the rest. Slytherin." The last word was shouted out loud.

Harry and Snape were shocked as were McGonagall and Nicholas. But none more than Sirius himself who got up in a daze and went to sit with the Slytherins not having a word to say and sat quietly in a state of shock till dinner was over.

Remus was frantically reassuring him and telling him to keep their main goal in sight but poor Sirius was so dumbfounded and so shocked he could not respond.

Harry Potter went next and there was a deathly silence in the Hall as all of them turned to see Harry curiously. He walked quietly and confidently and placed the hat on his head. A second later 'Gryffindor' was heard and Harry's sorting was over.

Snape went last and hat sorted him in Gryffindor reducing him to a state like Sirius was at present. The hat had told Snape to watch Harry's back and Sirius would be a better candidate for Slytherin as he would blend in faster as a pure blood.

Snape had no answers to that and he went away gritting his teeth and promising to himself that he would burn the hat at the first opportunity he got. To think he had to live in Gryffindor!

An idea struck him so forcibly, he almost smiled. Maybe he could work from within and pull the Gryffindors down. That would be fine only that ass called Black would probably wreck more vengeance on his beloved House if he ever got a whiff of what Snape was doing.

Albus was happy with the sorting. Harry in Gryffindor meant Peter could keep an eye on him easily and spy on him. He got up after dinner was over to make the various start of term announcements. He told the students about North High and Harry Potter and about all the banned lists of items and scaring the students about the Forbidden Forest.

He had decided to question Harry the next morning, now that it looked Harry would not go away anywhere.

Snape and Sirius went glumly to bed. Sirius after being enquired about his blood status and indignantly defending himself was taken under Draco Malfoy's care and he went down to the dungeons to toss and turn and think of horrifying ways to repay the sorting hat for its kindness.

The next morning Harry, and Snape, prompted by Harry waved cheerfully to Sirius who smiled at him a little. He was with Malfoy and shrugged his shoulders at the raised eyebrows that Malfoy gave him.

"We met on the train." He said shortly. Malfoy was looking speculatively at Harry as he knew how beneficial that friendship would be. "Perhaps you could introduce us." He said casually, but Sirius was not fooled. The madness had officially begun.

McGonagall and Nicholas had simultaneously got down from the staff table to begin handing out schedules and Nicholas smiled warmly at Sirius and Malfoy as he handed their timetables to them.

McGonagall did the same with her Gryffindors and then Albus stood up and came up to Harry's seat and softly asked him to meet him at his office after breakfast and before classes.

There was a sudden tenseness in the four students and two professors as Albus left the Great Hall. Nicholas had arranged for his phoenix to always be present when ever Harry was in Albus's office, so that if anything untoward happened Fawkes would take Harry away to his home safely.

Harry leisurely finished his breakfast and went to the Albus' office after asking McGonagall the way. He reached there and waited patiently for Albus to call him.

Albus in the meanwhile had closed off the portraits and had called Arthur Weasley for support if Harry would step out of line and told him to bring his invisibility cloak with him.

He would give Harry the imperious potion mixed with the tea and give him a list of instructions and find out about who had been helping Harry all these years and then send him off to his classes with a show of great concern.

After doing all this and warning Arthur to be absolutely silent, Albus went down five minutes later and smiling away, took Harry to his office.

Harry was on full alert and as he went up the stairs he sent his magic and found another presence by the doorway, but was invisible to the naked eye. He surmised it to be Arthur Weasley as he had seen the rat with Ron in the Great Hall.

As soon as he went in, Albus offered him a cup of tea that Harry vanished a little every time he apparently took a sip. Albus was watching him with a very satisfied expression on his face making small talk all the time and expressing his concern about Harry's well being all these years he had not come to Hogwarts.

As soon as Harry had finished the cup of tea and set it down, Albus pounced. "Where were you all these years?"

"I was at the Potter castle. Why do you have any problems with it Sir?" asked Harry neutrally. He had opened his mind link with Snape and had activated the ring for everyone to hear. All of them were

anxiously listening and in fact Perenelle was inside the office waiting to see if Albus would try something and if he did to take Harry away.

“What! How can that be? Isn’t that castle closed till you come of age?” Albus was shocked. His world was crumbling in front of him and he was helpless to do anything. How could this boy get into Potter castle? Why did not the goblins inform him when Harry had gone to them? How did Harry go to them in the first place? Who told him about the magical world?

“Sir, not to be disrespectful but really all this is no concern of yours. I am the Head of the Potter and the Black families and am emancipated and an adult in the magical world and am legally endowed with the rights to carry on any activities that are on the right side of the law. Was there anything else you wish to ask of me?”

Albus was stunned. Harry was emancipated and an adult and the Head of the Potter and the Black families. Which meant he had the Potter and the Black rings on his fingers and that would make it next to impossible to cast any mind influencing charm or spell or potion that would work on him? The rings would protect him and it was no wonder Harry was speaking so clearly.

He smiled at Harry, though it looked as if he was suffering from extreme bowel movements or rather the lack of it. “Harry! May I see your rings, they have always fascinated me.”

Harry shook his hand once and the Potter and the black rings were very clearly visible and Albus just stopped short of a gulp knowing he could not show weakness in front of Harry or Arthur who was standing there. He smiled a dangerous smile. It was time for him to show the Heifer and the other side of him.

“Harry, who told you about the magical world and made you accept the position of the Head of the Potter and the Black families?” and at the same time sent a subtle Legilimency probe into his brain.

The next second he went crashing bruising his hundred and fifty year old body all over. He slowly picked himself up cursing quite violently and glaring at Harry and becoming even more furious when Harry did not react at all.

“So,” he started and then stopped as he flexed his hands with a groan and went purple in the face and stifled a scream as he straightened his back, a back that he was sure had broken, “You seem to have mastered Occlumency Harry. That is very good. Who taught it to you?”

“I learnt it from the books at the Potter Library Sir.” He answered briefly not bothering to ask Albus how he felt or demand indignantly why he had pried into his brain in the first place. Albus noticed the lack of care and emotion and gritted his teeth at audacity of the boy.

So Harry had somehow got out of his grasp and had gone to Potter castle. So the Potter vaults were as good as lost as they needed Harry’s permission to allow any other person inside and by the looks of it he would definitely not be that person.

He could not attack his mind as the rings especially the Potter rings would guard him against any mind compulsion. Harry had to be destroyed before he would destroy him and make the Prophecy come true. Well Albus would not decide anything now. Even the Potter vaults. Who knew, anything could happen. He would wait and watch and let the Tournament decide for him.

Harry had to die. That was a priority. He smiled at Harry and let him go.

The moment Harry left Albus screamed so loudly that he made Fawkes flew away in a flash of flame and many trinkets were completely destroyed in a desperate burst of magic. Arthur was also shocked at the Harry he saw, but he managed to keep his cool and tried his level best to calm Albus.

He was not successful and left a little while later as he had to go to the Ministry. Albus was sitting there all through the day missing lunch and thinking furiously. He decided to bring in Voldemort as vaults or not, Harry could not live as he had some power that Albus did not know and Albus unfortunately did not know anything about him let alone his hidden powers.

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Harry in the meantime had gone to the first class of the day, year and as a student. He was relieved and was sure he had pulled it off quite well. He anxiously asked Snape who could not wait for him at the Headmaster's office entrance as they were still not good friends to the outside world.

Snape reassured him and through the rings the others had also told him he was just fine. Harry smiled and ran off to attend the first class of the day that was Potions. All the classes were with the Slytherins and they met Sirius gloomily trailing along with a suave and confidently drawling Draco.

Snape was standing with Hermione who was telling him as much as she could about the world of Potions and the glory that could be brewed and he was using all of his control to stop himself from strangling her. He looked up and saw Harry and almost hugged him in relief and looked longingly at the Slytherins who were standing on the other side in such disdain looking down on the Gryffindors.

"Hello Harry, I was telling Salazar here about Potions and he was not very interested, I think." Turning to Snape, "Maybe you don't like Potions very much or are not you not very good at them?" she asked kindly. "If you need any help then I will be glad to tell you anything." She added as Snape made a strange noise and looked green.

Sirius for the first time since he had donned the sorting Hat smiled. Harry laughed and thanked Hermione and assured her Salazar was very grateful only he was grumpy because of an upset stomach, a statement that caused Sirius's smile to widen into a grin, Hermione's perplexed expression to one of understanding and Snape's green face to slowly start becoming purple as he yelled using the link at Harry.

"I tell you I am going to ask Nell to give me the fast aging potion and then I will come back as Snape and then I will take away five hundred points from these idiots who call themselves Gryffindor and simply tear Granger to shreds. How dare she ask me if I know about potions?"

Harry laughed and cut him off. "Sev, she was only being kind. Don't be mean." He said, seeing Snape continued to grumble though his face returned to normal.

Harry saw Malfoy looking amused at the conversation among the Gryffindors and walked up to him and held out his hand greeting Sirius at the same time.

"Hello David, how was Slytherin? Enjoyed yourself?" and stopped right there as Sirius's face turned the same shade of green Snape's had only a few moments before. He turned to Malfoy and held out his hand, "hi, I am Harry." He said with a smile.

Malfoy looked at his hand for a few moments and then slowly lifted his hand to shake. "I am Draco Malfoy." They shook briefly as Ron who was watching all this with the other Gryffindors with his mouth open, exclaimed in horror, "Harry, they are Slytherins."

"So? They are not contagious are they? Come on Ron, they are just like us. We spoke to David all through yesterday did we not? We found him fine then." He said sternly, glaring a little at Ron.

"But You-Know-Who was from Slytherin and everyone in Slytherin has gone badly and they are all death eaters." Ron protested.

"Really? Do you know something Ron? In my home I found a letter from my Dad and Mom and a pensieve recording saying that if they were betrayed and killed then the person responsible for their deaths was not Sirius Black as everyone thinks but another friend of them called Peter Pettigrew as they changed secret keepers only a week before they were killed and no one knew of the change except them Sirius Black and Pettigrew.

"And my point is this Pettigrew who was my Dad's best friend is from Gryffindor. So you know it is the person and not the House that is bad or good. And if Malfoy and Kent want to be friends with me I will be happy to be friends with them. Kent?"

"Hey my name is David and yes I would love to be friends with all of you and so would Malfoy and all the others here." Looking at the incredulous looks that the other Slytherins were giving him for



speaking in such a desperate manner he shrugged, "What? I only said we would be friends not write away our family fortune."

It was almost five minutes since class should have started, but Nicholas had been waiting for the ice to break and he intervened now and clapping his hands asked all of them to come in.

He set them to prepare a complicated potion after stressing upon them the importance of OWLS that all of them would be taking that year.

Harry sat with Malfoy and Snape sat with Hermione with the sole purpose of showing her a thing or two about potions and stopping her speech forever. Sirius sat with Ron after asking him silently with raised eyebrows.

Ron hesitated as he had suffered a lot with the Slytherins but Kent was different as he was a new student and he had been so friendly the day before. Then he shrugged and sat down next to Sirius and started work.

Hermione was astounded at the knowledge displayed by the boy next to her. He was working efficiently and almost lovingly completing the potion in record time. She flushed with embarrassment as she thought of how patronizing she had sounded before the class. She looked around to see a shocked Malfoy who had completed the potion along with Harry and Sirius who was in the last stages of the potion.

Ron was bemused at the novel experience of working with a slytherin successfully and had still not come to terms with it. As they left the class Hermione said in a low voice, "Salazar, I am sorry. You were amazing and I was so stupid to tell you to ask me about a subject you seemed to know so well."

Snape was uncomfortable now as Hermione had come down and apologized for Merlin's sake for wanting to help him. So he shrugged it off and told her not to bother as she was only trying to help.

All of them trooped off to transfiguration. They made such an odd group. Malfoy was fascinated by such a knowledgeable Harry who

had no schooling till now. His potion had been perfect and he had brewed it even without looking at the board for instructions or anything.

Draco Malfoy was fascinated as he walked silently with Harry to the next class that was Charms. "What are the electives that you have taken?"

Harry turned to look at Malfoy. "Well runes, I simply love the subject, Arithmancy and parcel magic."

Malfoy looked up at Harry sharply as did almost all the others except Sirius and Snape. "parcel magic?" asked Pansy Parkinson who found this walking with the Gryffindors so strange she was counting on this to be a nightmare from where she hoped would wake up. For now she and the others were following Draco Malfoy's lead.

"Well I can speak Parceltongue. So I looked up the books at my home and found there was a subject called Parcel magic and so I learnt it. I have chosen that as an elective and I will be taking that exam on my own."

They had reached the Transfiguration classroom by then and all of them went in silently as they thought about what Harry had revealed.

The rest of the day proceeded normally with a minor shock as all of them encountered Snape's pet snake and Harry's phoenix. Most of the others had seen the phoenix at one time or the other when they had been to the shop and they were envious that she had chosen Harry.

Snape carried his snake with him to the Great Hall for dinner and Lily was on Harry's shoulder. Albus had been in his office all day long came down for dinner his bones still aching from the fall he took. As he left for dinner he saw a rat sliding in as he opened the door. He closed it at once and went to his private room and warded the door.

Peter transformed at once and told Albus all that had transpired that day and how Harry was aware that it was not Sirius but he, who had betrayed James and Lily. Albus was getting angrier by the minute as he listened to Peter and when he heard how casually Harry admitted

to knowing Parceltongue and that he was well versed in Parcel magic he almost exploded.

Albus was also a Parceltongue and the fact this boy would be able to fight him back when he used parcel magic brought another burst of uncontrollable magical explosion that resulted in scalding a scared Peter.

Albus wrenched the door open and walked swiftly outside and went to the Great Hall not able to control his anger, a fact that was noted by Harry and the others.

He took his place at the center not speaking to anyone throughout the meal and after dinner ended stood up to announce the Triwizard Tournament.

“This year there will be a prestigious tournament called the Triwizard Tournament in which students from three schools of magic will take part. This will take place in the last week before Halloween. There will be only one task and that will be based on testing your bravery, daring, your magical knowledge and other skills.

The person who successfully completes the task will be declared the winner. There will be five students from each school who will be chosen by a magical goblet and once your name comes out it will be mandatory to take part. The winner will be the champion and will walk away with five thousand galleons and the Triwizard Cup.

“All students from fifth year and above will be eligible. Those who do not want to participate may give your names by evening tomorrow. The other contestants are coming in the course of the next week, when we shall choose the main candidates. Good luck to you all!” he sat down abruptly as he started planning how to resurrect Voldemort at this time.

All the students went to their common rooms discussing about the Triwizard tournament. Harry waved to Malfoy and Sirius who was looking glum again at the prospect of going to the Slytherin common room and stay there in their dormitories till morning.

Draco was huffing at his attitude and he raised incredulous eyebrow when Sirius had rather lamely said he wanted to be with Harry and Salazar as he had become friends with Harry and he was already friends with Salazar.

Draco shook his head and dragging Sirius with him, hissing to him not to spoil the name of the greatest House in Hogwarts which in turn made Sirius snort and Draco huff a bit more before returning Harry's wave with a short movement of his hand that could be called anything. Harry smiled and felt victorious.

"You may well feel triumphant Harry. Malfoy is the leader and most of the Slytherins who might join Voldemort will come from these children." Muttered Snape in Harry's mind.

Snape was looking equally glum as he stomped off to what he thought was a hideous common room with disgusting dormitories. "How can anyone sleep in the midst of so much red and gold?" he whispered to Harry.

"Why I thought it is nice. I mean, the colors are all so bright and cheerful." Harry was behaving as if he had had an overdose of chocolate.

"That is disgusting. How can you be so cheerful and just tell me how can this color not blind you?" he demanded.

Harry laughed along with Hermione though Ron looked affronted at the insult to his beloved common room. "Hey! Salazar it is nice, you know?"

"But I can understand what you are saying though." Hermione was cut off by Snape muttering a, "wow! Brilliant."

Hermione seemed unperturbed as she had got used to his sarcastic remarks all through the day. She nudged him and smiled at his scowl, "I too found it a bit loud at first, though now it has grown on me. Don't worry Sal," she once again ignored Snape's face that was doing a wonderful job of scowling snarling, glaring and muttering all together, "you will get used to this and soon you will love this."

Snape looked at her with an incredulous expression on his face, said something that sounded suspiciously like 'never till I die,' and 'Merlin is she mad?' but Hermione wisely ignored it and saying a cheerful good night that almost set off Snape to snarl again went to the girl's dorm.

Harry and the others went to their dorm, undressed and went to bed. Harry said goodnight to Ron who was still glaring mildly at Snape who was scowling and rubbing his eyes every two minutes in an exaggerated motion of becoming color blind.

Snape and Harry then spent the next half hour discussing the events of the day, when Lily brought Sirius and Remus into Harry's dorm. Luckily Harry had silencing charms and had heavily warded his bed and curtains and so no one heard his yells as both Sirius and Remus landed on him.

Snape also joined them and they spent the next hour joyfully laughing hysterically as they heard of Albus being thrown out of Harry's mind. Planning for the next day, all of them finally went to their own beds to try and sleep.

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Draco Malfoy was lying in his bed thinking furiously about Harry Potter. What a contradiction and he was and behaved almost like a Slytherin and the most shocking thing he had done was something that no one in all these years had. He had broken the solid glacier that till today had been impenetrable between Griffindor and Slytherin.

Harry had shook hands with him and also befriended him. He had defended this House that was always hated by everyone, to the stupid Weasel and the others and had made that Know-it-all Granger to join hands with him. As a result a feud of four years that he had with Griffindor and its members had been shattered and all of them had been together the whole day.

Harry would be worth cultivating he thought and his thoughts ran on furiously about Harry's nonchalant acceptance of being able to speak Parceltongue and he had heard of the careless behavior Harry

exhibited towards the Headmaster on the train. That intrigued him. He heard a huge sigh and realized David Kent was not asleep.

"Kent?" he whispered. There was total silence for a minute and then a cautious voice answered, "Yes? Is that you Malfoy?"

"May I come in?" asked Draco and walked in without invitation.

Sirius had just come in, removed the various wards and was just getting into bed, sighing hugely as he thought longingly of the dorm he had just left and his heart was full of envy as he thought of Snape and the only thing that made him feel slightly better was the fact Snape felt the same way about him being down here. But then he had Harry with him and Sirius was all alone.

As he finished getting ready for bed and at the same time crying about the injustice of it all to Remus and was trying to sleep Malfoy's voice had preceded him into his curtains and bed where he was lying down.

He got up and sat down on the bed allowing Malfoy to sit down beside him. Sirius became alert as he waited for Malfoy to speak.

"You spent the whole day with Potter yesterday did you not?"

"Yes. Why?" Sirius was curious and it showed on his face.

"Draco?" another voice softly sounded in the silence of the night. It was Blaize Zabini. A moment later he came in followed by Theodore Nott. Draco looked at them in surprise. Then he nodded, understanding. They too were confused and bewildered.

They sat down on Sirius's bed in uncomfortable silence for a few minutes. Then, "Are you going to take part in the Tournament?" asked Blaize. Sirius nodded carefully alert. These were the deciders in the House and to get them on Harry's side would be equal to a coup.

"What did you think of Potter? You spent all day yesterday with him, didn't you?" Draco asked as the other two waited for the answer silently.

“Yes, I spent all day with him yesterday and I think he is very unruffled and very powerful. He did not even blink an eyelid as Dumbledore came in to greet him on the train and today Sal, you know Salazar, and he was saying something about Harry telling Dumbledore to mind his own business when he asked Harry where he had been all these years.”

“Where was he? And does he really have a good impression about Slytherin? Or is that for show?” asked Nott.

“Well for someone in Griffindor Harry loves our House you know, more than our House he loves our Founder. He admires Salazar Slytherin for his Potions and his great knowledge on Parcel magic and wandless magic. I believe he has a lot of books in his castle that tells him all this and he says all this house prejudices are all rubbish. At least that is what he was telling Ron.

“He says he learnt so many things from Salazar Slytherin through the books in his Library and that he was a great visionary and it was a shame he and his House are treated so shabbily.”

Sirius finished and carefully looked around gauging their reactions. All of them were looking very thoughtful as they tried to match the image of the Boy-who-Lived they had known for so long with a Harry Potter who was cool, calm and totally unperturbed and nonchalant and a friend of Slytherin. And he was very powerful, Draco thought as he remembered sitting next to him all day. He could literally feel the power rolling off Harry.

“You know Potter only since yesterday?” Sirius nodded vigorously to Draco’s question. “I like him though and I wished he was placed in Slytherin with me.” Sirius crossed his fingers as that was a lie. What he wanted was to be away from here.

“That would have been better as we could have assessed Potter better.” Draco was thinking out loud. “Do you think he will be willing to talk to us?”

“Hey! I really don’t know him all that well. I mean I know him for exactly a day longer than all of you have. But seeing the way he is, I feel he will have no problems. Maybe we could invite him to sit with

us for breakfast or lunch and ask him what we want to. I have my own questions as well especially about the level of magic he knows. For someone who attended his first day in school today he was superb.”

“Then that is what we will do. We will see if Potter is really willing to break the traditions and sit with us tomorrow.” Draco got up and saying goodnight went to sleep, still thinking about Harry James Potter. The others followed as well.

Sirius placed silencing charms and activated the rings and told Harry, Snape, Remus, McGonagall and Nicholas as well as Perenelle all that had happened and what Harry had to be prepared for the morrow.

Harry listened silently to all that Sirius had said and waited for Snape to come and scramble into his bed. Harry looked at him and grinned. “So your Slytherins want a new leader against Albus hmm? But what if Albus comes in as Voldemort? Then who will they align themselves with Voldemort or I?”

“That is what we will be working on won’t we? We will have to make sure that they realize you are not Albus’s puppet and you are powerful enough to take him and Voldemort together if need be. You will also need an agenda to pacify the pure-bloods. Tomorrow if they ask you anything about your feelings on issues of blood, make sure not to put the importance of blood purity down.

“The Tournament will be one way to show that power but, I fear Albus will probably resurrect Voldemort during it as he will want Voldemort to finish you off and he will kill Voldemort and become a hero once again. You must be careful Harry.”

Harry nodded his head and after Snape had left thought back to the events of the day. His first day of school. A school to which he must have been going for the last four years. But he had spent more than that time studying twelve hours a day without a break so that Albus could be defeated.

He sighed heavily. He could think of living and dream of so many things only after he had avenged his parents and repaid all the hard work and sacrifice Snape, Sirius, Remus and the Flammels had done



for him. They had rescued him, taught him and kept him safe till he was a power to be reckoned with.

If he could take care of Albus soon at least he could enjoy school for the remaining time. He grinned as he thought of Hermione and the way she unconsciously riled Snape. And the way Sirius had ogled Ginny. He would have to tease Sirius about it.

From there his thoughts went to Draco. He had liked the boy on sight and was happy to have him as an acquaintance for now. Maybe he would become Harry's friend later. Hermione was nice too and he knew she would be nicer if she toned down her display of knowledge and curiosity.

If he could sway Slytherin, half his battle would be over. Well time would tell. "Yes." Said Snape in his mind irritably. "Now go to sleep." And Harry grinned and snuggled deeper into his bed.

End of Chapter – 12

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## Chapter – 13

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As all the younger members went to sleep, McGonagall was discussing the sorting with Nicholas and Perenelle in the dungeons.

“How could the Hat make such a mistake? Placing Severus in Gryffindor and Sirius in Slytherin. Both of them are so unhappy and I am not sure it was a right thing to do. Sirius has no Slytherin qualities and Severus as a Gryffindor is simply laughable. Both of them may make serious mistakes that might cost us.” Minerva did not like this sorting where the hat in her opinion had done the wrong thing.

Nicholas smiled as did Perenelle. “Minerva, yes Sirius is Gryffindor material, but so is Severus. He made a mistake early in his life and got out of it by a desperate act of swearing an oath to Albus. But nine years later it was he who got all of us together and made us into a unit to fight Albus.

“Again, he has formed a bond so deep with Harry overlooking the fact he is the son of a man who tormented him all his seven years at Hogwarts and till now he has been willing and working with Sirius who led him to face a grown werewolf and I am sure is willing to die for Harry. He loves the boy.

“Those are Gryffindor qualities and for Slytherin he really lacks the finesse and the casual power that comes so naturally to Sirius, Draco and the others because of their ancestry and bringing up, that Severus was deprived of and he never really had access to the type of living that these Slytherins take for granted.

“Sirius on the other hand will never succumb like Severus did to the power that Slytherin can give because he has seen how destructive it can be and at the same time he also has the charisma to take on Malfoy, Zabini, Parkinson and Nott on his own. That is something Severus could never hope to do. Remember he was a loner and was an outcast of sorts in Slytherin when he was a student here.”

Minerva agreed reluctantly. She knew the boys were horrified not to mention very depressed that they had been sorted differently. Sirius

especially as he had fought Slytherin all it stood for, all through his life. Well it could not be helped. She sighed and retired to her bed, taking a ride with Lily whom she had called as she did not want to be seen in the corridors.

The next morning Harry came down with Snape and Ron and met Hermione and Ginny in the common room and all of them left for the Great Hall to have some breakfast.

As they neared the entrance, they were met by Malfoy, Sirius, Pansy Parkinson, Nott, Crabbe, Goyle and Zabini who were all waiting for Harry and company to arrive.

As soon as Malfoy saw Harry he walked up to him, "Potter, are you willing to sit with us for breakfast today?" he asked mockery and challenge in every word.

"Only me or all of us?" was all that Harry asked.

Draco did not answer for a second. Then he came back with a drawl. "Why all of you, if you can make them sit at our table with us. You will find it difficult though."

Harry did not answer Draco Malfoy. He turned to Snape, Hermione, Ron, Seamus, Dean and Neville who had joined them with their wands drawn initially and as they heard the conversation their wands hung limply by their side and their mouths open in horror and disbelief.

A boy who had just arrived yesterday had broken so many barriers it was next to impossible. Harry was actually going to sit with the snakes and he was calling them to accompany him to add to the unnaturalness of it all.

"Well?" Harry asked smiling. "The Slytherins have shown courage by asking us if we dare to sit with them at their table. *Do we dare to?*"

"That was positively Slytherin." Approved Snape. He and Hermione went at once and stood behind Harry with the Slytherins. Snape happily because he could avoid one meal at the bloody Gryffindor table and Hermione because she wanted to see where Harry would go with this and if the Slytherins would actually allow a muggleborn

student whom they had insulted in so many ways till now, to break bread with them.

Ron and the others were standing with their jaws hitting the floor, gaping at Harry as if he had gone mad.

The next surprising thing that would make him, who was thought weak and almost a squib by everyone, to command the respect of all of them present there including the Slytherins was Neville, who smiled at Harry and walked up a trifle nervously, but very bravely and stood with Snape.

Snape was shocked, if anyone had suffered more than Ron Weasley it was Neville Longbottom at the hands of the Slytherins. Malfoy looked at Neville with as much shock as Snape and a reluctant respect crept into his eyes. He nodded slightly at Neville and looked at the others.

Ron was flabbergasted. These were the bad guys for Merlin's sake and what was Harry, a new boy even thinking of. They could poison all of them at the breakfast table for all Harry knew. And now Neville Longbottom had joined them. Neville whose parents' had been made into a mental mess by Malfoy's aunt and he was standing with Harry.

Ron was in such a quandary. He did not know what to do and sighed. His life had been pretty simple so far and yesterday he had thought it a great honor to befriend Harry and had been proud the Headmaster had chosen him over the others. But he had not bargained for changing centuries old practices.

He was comfortable cursing and getting cursed by the Slytherins and all this show of friendliness did not appeal to him. But Hermione and Neville had gone over and he did not know what to do as Harry had asked all of them if they dared to and he did not want to look as if he was lacking in courage because he did not agree with Harry.

He stood there dithering and blinking and wishing he could go back to the old ways of snarling, cursing and getting cursed by the Slytherins. This new thinking confused him and he did not know what to do. In the meantime both Seamus and Dean had been looking at each other and they gave such incredulous looks to both Neville and Hermione.

“Are you mad? Harry might be new and so he would not know about these Dark wizards but you do, Hermione and Neville. Have you both officially lost it? Neville have you forgotten Malfoy’s aunt is Bellatrix Lestranger?” Seamus was incredulous as he looked at Neville, making Ron heave a huge sigh of relief that he need not choose just then.

“I know Seamus. But Harry is trying in the one day he has been here to put an end to the feud that has raged here forever. I think we must all help him to achieve it as it could only mean good for all of us. I am going to support Harry not that hag who harmed my parents’.” And glaring defiantly if a little nervously at Draco.

Malfoy was impressed. In one day and that was amazing, Harry had managed to turn the school on its head. And he was even more impressed with Neville Longbottom. Maybe he was justified to be placed in Gryffindor after all. He certainly showed guts by not only joining Potter but also by calling his aunt a hag in front of him.

Harry grinned at Malfoy and looked at Ron, “Well today we will be there Ron. You are welcome to join us whenever you want.” Saying he linked his arms with Sirius and went off to the Slytherin tables.

He entered the Great Hall and looked directly into Albus’s eyes and stopped right there. Albus was glaring at him chanting something under his breath and Harry felt his Occlumency shields beginning to slip. He at once looked down for a second but his shields were continuing to crack and so Harry braced himself and lifted his eyes taking on Albus by simply thinking one single thought of wanting Albus to get out of his head.

There was a deadlock for about five minutes as Albus was chanting furiously but Harry’s magic, will and intent kept Albus at bay pushing him out repeatedly as he tried to force his way inside and at the same time break not only the shields inside Harry’s mind, but Harry’s mind totally. Then suddenly there was another person behind Harry who was helping him to push out the Headmaster.

Snape had been watching with growing horror at the black magic used by Albus as was Sirius. Both of them looked at each other and then at Harry silently communicating with their eyes and then with a small nod Zack turned to Harry with a frown on his face, a fact that

was not lost on Malfoy as he frowned at the implications that Kent and Zack had closer associations with Harry than they let on, as they seemed to know just what was happening.

All the others by now had understood there was something going on between the Boy-who-Lived and the Headmaster and it was not all good. With a sudden desperate push Harry, backed by Snape, sent Albus crashing out of his mind.

Albus was indeed indulging in a spot of Black magic and he was trying to break the Occlumency shield inside of Harry's mind. He had also prepared a reason if anyone would ask him, as he suspected Minerva would.

He decided to tell them he had deducted a strange presence in Harry's mind and he was trying to remove it the Black and dreadful presence with Black magic that he had hastily studied in the last day to help Harry.

He would say he deducted an alien presence when Harry had come up to his office the day before and he was very much afraid it might be Voldemort, but Harry and that presence had on instinct managed to push him out. So he was trying to surprise Harry by attacking that presence at a time Harry was not aware of it.

Albus also hoped to create a suspicion and make the people believe that Harry had a link to Voldemort. While the link he had created had been nullified and Albus could not attack Harry through it, the people would never know and while Harry may be the Boy-who-Lived, Albus still commanded total respect in the wizarding world.

By saying Harry had a link to Voldemort people would panic and never believe him as they would conclude everything that came from him could be words from Voldemort. Harry would have no real standing in the wizarding world as it would always look at him with suspicion and fear.

He had spent all night with Peter and Arthur performing Black magic rituals in the Forbidden Forest and had returned very strong. He had in addition taken yet another dose of the Stone and was fighting fit in the morning, impatiently waiting to attack Harry.

As soon as Harry had come in he had attacked, chanting strongly to break the shields in Harry's mind. If he could not control Harry by taking over his mind he might as well do his best to destroy it so that the blasted boy would not look at him with such disdain and disrespect as he did the day before, ever.

There was a minute when Albus felt he had succeeded in breaking Harry's mind shields. Once he did that it would take no longer than a minute to break his mind. But suddenly there seemed another force helping Harry to push him out. He renewed his efforts with a last desperate burst of energy and all of this would have taken another five minutes or so when,

**CRASH!!!!**

The students watched with a horrified fascination as Albus went along with his chair and crashed into the wall behind. There was no sound after that from him.

Harry had, in the meantime crumpled on to the floor with Snape falling down with him. Sirius rushed to Harry's side and signaling to Draco, he levitated Harry and Draco understanding did the same with Snape and they left for the infirmary.

Soon all the Slytherins and Hermione, Neville, Ron, Seamus and Dean were walking swiftly to the infirmary where Sirius simply told Madame Pomfrey that Harry had fallen unconscious as he tried to keep staring at the Headmaster and Snape had crumpled to the floor with him when Harry had fallen down.

Pomfrey tutted and swiftly asking Sirius and Draco to levitate and place Harry and Snape on the bed started, examining them. She ran her wand over Harry and frowned and almost scowled as she ran it over Snape.

"Who has tried to attack their minds? Both of them have fainted because of Black magic. How dare someone use it and how dare they use it in this school?" Pomfrey was furious and yelling at all of them even as she ran to and fro to get vials of potions down their throats.

At that time Nicholas came rushing in with a few more vials and poured them down Harry and Snape's throat. About ten minutes later Snape groaned and opened his eyes, and looked around not comprehending where he was or the identity he had taken.

"Black?" he asked vaguely remembering that this boy standing and looking over him was Sirius Black but unable to understand just why he was standing with him or looking so concerned. He also did not look like Black and Snape was wondering why Black had come in disguise.

Maybe to prank him a bit more when he was feeling so down and a wave of self-pity engulfed him as he thought of how alone he was that Black of all people had to be standing over him, when he was feeling so unwell. Unless, he thought darkly, it was Black who was doing all this in the first place.

Sirius froze. God! Whatever Albus did had addled his brain. Snape was going to have all of them killed by blabbering about all of their identities. For a wild moment he thought of stunning all of them and taking Harry and this idiot away to Potter castle and take care of them there.

Nicholas also froze for a second when Snape had seen and called Sirius as Black. Then composing himself he remedied and diffused the tension that was literally breaking Sirius. "Yes, it was Black magic or at least it did look like it. What do you say Poppy?" he asked enquiringly and looked at her to see her nodding her head.

"That is exactly what I said James. It is Black magic and I am going to make sure that Albus expels the person who has performed this little piece of magic." She said, still angry and shocked that some was daring enough to perform Black magic in school.

Nicholas smiled sadly. "It was Albus, Poppy. He was trying to get into Harry's mind and I think this new boy, what is his name, ah yes, Salazar Zack was also somehow dragged into this. I am really at a loss to explain the use of Black magic on a boy but I think we must wait for Albus to wake up before we can come to conclusions about anything."



Pomfrey was totally stunned. Black magic? By the Headmaster, the same Headmaster whom she had threatened to inform and complain to about Black magic being performed at the School? What was happening here and the new boy Harry Potter had yet to wake up.

“But why? And for what? And what happened to Albus and why has he to wake up?” Pomfrey was bewildered and shocked.

The students who had gathered there were more than shocked. It was on outrage and against the law to even probe into someone’s mind and here their own Headmaster had used Black magic to probe into the mind of his own students.

Snape had recovered by then and Draco was silently watching the by play as Kent and Zack whispered to each other and the way both of them kept looking with worry and fear towards Harry.

It took another hour during which McGonagall came in to see about her students with her lips in a thin straight line and looking absolutely furious, for Harry to wake up.

To the students surprise no one was asked to leave for their classes indicating to Draco once again that something was going on. Harry blinked his eyes and wearily tried to sit up, “Sev?” he asked very softly, so softly that no one except Sirius and Nicholas heard.

“He is fine Harry. How are you?” asked Sirius and Harry nodded his head to say he was fine, looking around for Snape and immediately winced. His head was pounding and hurting with an intensity he had never known before.

Snape hearing Harry’s voice probed in his mind for the link and slowly opened it. “Harry?” he called in his mind tentatively.

Harry replied at once, though his voice was very weak inside Snape’s head “Merlin, Sev how are you and thank you so much for helping me. If it hadn’t been for you Albus would have broken into my mind and that would have been the end of everything. He would have known who you all are and he would have been prepared and we would have lost.”

Snape was silent for a moment as he listened to the heartfelt relief that Harry expressed and snorted gently into Harry's mind, realizing the pain Harry must be in, if his own was any indication. "Silly, stupid Harry. And just what makes you think I will not come to your aid when that excuse for a human being is trying to rape your mind and destroy you, Potter?" he sneered gently.

Harry grinned. Baffling the others except Sirius who knew Harry was conversing with Snape and felt a pang of jealousy before he squashed it. Snape was instrumental in bringing all of them together and making sure he and Remus got another chance to avenge the death of James and of course Lily.

"Thanks Sev." Harry spoke softly in Snape's mind. Snape snorted again but did not say anything. The potions Nicholas had given to Harry and Snape were doing their work and they would be able to get up and resume their normal lives in a day.

All the others were shooed out by Pomfrey and Draco noticed a first year that had come there and had been peering anxiously at Harry and Snape. He did not leave with the others and stayed back saying he had a stomach ache. Draco found it strange as the boy had come in sometime before but was only now complaining of an ache.

Draco also noticed that Kent had also made no move to leave and McGonagall and Williams did not ask him or the first year to go. As they walked back, he made a sudden decision and saying he had to collect his quill from the infirmary where he had dropped it sent his friends on their way and walked back swiftly to the infirmary.

He saw McGonagall and Williams conversing deeply as they too went to their respective classes. After he crossed them, he cast an invisibility charm as well as a notice-me-not charm on himself and peered into the open infirmary. Pomfrey was checking Potter and the other boy, Zack. After about three minutes she left the infirmary to get some potions warning Kent and the first year she called 'Brent' not to disturb the Potter and Zack and saying she would be back in five minutes and the Kent should leave.

The moment she had shut the door behind her Kent literally fell on Harry and hugged him, shocking Draco. The first year also did the

same and then both the boys turned to a sneering Zack and also enquired about him anxiously.

Draco watched, stunned at the display of familiarity and friendliness among the four.

“Oh my god! Harry I was so scared. Snape! What the bloody hell happened?”

“Sirius, how many times have I told you to call Severus by name?” admonished Harry.

“Harry, please I would rather not have Black call me at all let alone by my name.”

Harry sighed. “I thought we had gone past all that. Apparently we still have a lot of work to do. Remus, why don’t you say something to these two buffoons or are they well beyond redemption?”

“And pray tell me who wants redemption if it means being friendly with Black?” sneered Snape.

“You talk as if I am begging for it. Even though it hurts me to agree on any issue with the ass, Harry, Snape is right. I mean who wants to be friends with a greasy git?”

“Are you two going to shut up because my head is killing me already and your squabbling is not helping any.” Harry was irritated that these two would never openly patch up and it showed in his frustrated tone.

Both of them shut up at once and at that point Pomfrey came bustling in and shooed all of them out and told them not to come till the next morning.

Sirius and Remus left reluctantly and Draco went down to the dungeons to his dormitory, missing his classes for the rest of the day and earning three detentions and a loss of fifty points from Slytherin and the ire of his House mates. But he did not seem unduly worried and with barely an apology went about his work.

But he was thinking very, very hard and coming up with all kinds of explanations and conclusions for what he had seen and he was thinking alone. He was very quiet for the rest of the week, though on full alert and watched Harry, Zack, Kent and Brent like a hawk.

Harry returned to classes along with Zack the next day. Both of them demanded an explanation from the Headmaster and threatened to move out of school if they did not receive an explanation and an apology from the Headmaster for conducting Black magic.

They had to wait for two days as the Headmaster was not in the land of the living for three days and could only meet them on the fourth day.

Albus had chanted and chanted furiously, and he was winning when he deducted another presence helping Harry and applied all his strength to break both of them. He wondered angrily about the other presence and as he chanted with barely a break he was stunned at the fight Harry helped by the other person was putting up.

Suddenly he felt himself pushed with a last desperate effort and Albus's horror he felt himself thrown out rather violently and before he could think what had gone wrong, he had crashed into the wall behind and had slipped into unconsciousness.

It was three days before he woke up and he felt as if a mountain had come down on him. All his muscles seemed sore and his bones brittle. He moved with a groan and slowly tried to sit up. He gave it up as a bad job after twenty tries. Looking around, he glimpsed the potion bottles and at the same time Peter, who had been sleeping, woke up.

He immediately jumped up and without a word, took some ten potions, left there by Pomfrey and poured them one by one into Albus's throat. After taking them Albus felt better and getting up slowly, he went to a cupboard and opening it, took a small vial and drank it fully.

It was the potion made from the Stone and it immediately brought back the strength into his body. Along with the healing potions, he felt better and he sat down to ask Peter what had happened.

“Albus what did you do? You have been out for more than three days now and you have Minerva and Williams furious that you tried something like Black magic on Harry and Harry is demanding an explanation and an apology from you or else he has been saying he will leave the school. The Governors were also here; how they came to know of this I have no clue as anyone in the Great Hall could have written to their parents. They are also demanding an explanation as well.”

“Harry was fine? Nothing affected him?” Albus felt a surge of jealousy that ripped through him. He had been unconscious for three days while Harry was going about as usual he thought bitterly to himself as he looked to Peter for answers.

“Harry and that new boy Zack were unconscious for about an hour and then they were kept in for a day in the infirmary for observation by Pomfrey before they were allowed to go. Zack tried to hold Harry’s hand and when he got too close he was pulled in by Harry’s magic is what I heard him say with awe and fear to the others.

“Harry apologized to that boy and since then has become friendly with him. Harry and a lot of Gryffindors are now for the last two days sitting with the Slytherins at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Harry has become very close to Draco and that lot and frankly Albus it is all very worrying.

“Arthur’s own, Ron, Ginny, Harry, Longbottom, Thomas, Finnegan, Lovegood, Zack and the Twins are some of them who have been changing tables and Minerva has been quite encouraging of all this.” Peter finished telling Albus all he could remember from the last three days.

Albus’ face had been steadily darkening as Peter went on and poor Peter was afraid of another scolding if Albus lost control of his magic. Fortunately for him, Albus was still too weak to let loose bursts of magical energy. But that small fact did not stop him from ranting and raving against Harry and Harry and Harry.....

It was good hour before he calmed down to gather himself to meet his Professors and still later with a lot gritting his teeth and clenching

his hands, and literally drowning himself in calming potions to meeting with Harry.

Albus had a very uncomfortable two hours with Minerva and Williams and an even more uncomfortable fifteen minutes with Harry and Zack in the presence of Minerva and Williams and the other Professors to who he had to make a collective statement. Though Zack seemed frightened Harry was furious and the blasted boy had the gall to tell him in no uncertain terms he would leave if one more incident like this happened.

Albus was made to eat humble pie and at the end of it all he had accomplished nothing. The Governors had not accepted Albus's statement that an alien presence had made him use Black magic however mild and the fact Harry was out only for an hour while it had affected him more did not impress them any better.

They told him in no uncertain terms that if they were not sure of his commitment and his past accomplishments he would have already been kissed. Fudge had saved him, to his eternal shame, in the end from being removed from Hogwarts as Headmaster and it had ended in a manner that made Albus realize what he had to do must be done in secret and without any body's knowledge.

This meant he could not touch the boy at Hogwarts as he knew if anything happened to the boy in Hogwarts fingers would straight away be pointed at him.

Voldemort had to come back and Albus because of this fiasco decided to bring back Voldemort sooner so that everyone would believe he had been saying the truth all along and it had been Voldemort that had been in Harry's mind controlling him.

So that week-end Albus recreated a golem that he made to resemble Voldemort, thinking about the irony of it all, a man he had thought would give him so much trouble, had been the easiest to take care of, while the boy whom he had thought was a piece of cake was defeating him at every turn and was forcing him to make rapid changes in his plans.

Albus hated deviating from his plans with little or no notice as it meant hurried preparations that usually ended badly as did the attack on Harry's mind. His anger had blinded him and he had made mistakes that had cost him dearly. Now he had to be careful as he would not be given any more chances to get rid of Harry, if Voldemort did not defeat the bloody Boy-who-Lived.

The other two schools Durmstrang and Beaubatons arrived at the end of the week and a couple of days later the magical Goblet was brought out and the names from the three schools were chosen.

Albus waited with bated breath as the champions for Hogwarts were announced. Five small slips of burnt paper flew out of the Goblet and the names that read were "Cedric Diggory, Draco Malfoy, Salazar Zack, David Kent and Hermione Granger".

The Goblet went silent and fire put itself off.

"All of you have exactly a month and a half to prepare for the task. You will be allowed to carry only a wand and your magical skills. The task will consist of a maze, in the center of which will be placed a cup and whoever gets to the cup first will be the winner." Said the Ministry official Barty Crouch Sr.

Albus was flabbergasted. He had confounded the Goblet into making the choices for Hogwarts by personally choosing the names of Potter, Diggory, Nott, Zabini and Malfoy so that as Voldemort he could order them to capture Harry for him and kill Harry as he did James. But now the fates had once again defeated him, it seemed.

Albus felt an icy cold hand clutch his heart as he suppressed a shudder. Harry Potter had got the better of him once again and he was clueless at that moment as to how to put an end to Harry Potter. He had been so sure that Harry would meet his end on the day of the Tournament but now it was not so.

Sitting there stunned and frightened, he did not see Minerva nodding in satisfaction at Professor Williams who smiled back at her. After all it had been him who had undone what Albus had done in the first place and he had confounded the Goblet all over again making sure

the names that came out would ensure a harmless competition and a completion to the Tournament without any loss of life.

End of Chapter – 13

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## Chapter – 14

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Draco Malfoy was deep in thought as his mind kept going to the events of the last hour. Potter had called Zack, Severus and Kent had called Zack, Snape. Now, as far as he knew there was only one Snape and he had been killed by werewolves. He knew Snape had no children, so who was this? And why did they go under assumed names and different identities? It was all so confusing and for a moment he thought of going to his father, but immediately brushed it aside.

His father would bring it to the notice of Dumbledore and that would be a problem as, if it was really Snape and what had the other two boys been called? Merlin! Sirius Black and Remus, Black was the murderer of Potter's parents' and wasn't he dead and rotting in prison? And who the bloody hell was Remus?

All of them had shared Harry's, Merlin! When had Potter become Harry? Well all of them had shared Harry's mistrust of the Headmaster and if went to Dumbledore, they might even leave the school again. That would not do. In the two days they had been there they had turned the school on its head and definitely made it more interesting. And Williams and McGonagall had also known. What did they know was the question that was burning a hole in his head?

He missed classes for the rest of the day not bothered about the detentions he received or the points he lost. The others trooped in and Pansy seeing Draco ran to him asking him if he was all right and felt his head for a fever and any illness. The others too came up to him to find out why he had not been there tormenting the Griffindors.

"What is the matter Dray? Where were you and why did you not come to classes all of today?" Pansy sounded worried.

"You know you landed no less than three detentions and we lost fifty points, thanks to your absence and that put us in third place after the bloody Hufflepuffs." Zabini was irritated as he glared at Draco.

Nott was looking at Draco speculatively. It had to be big, big for him to miss classes and also not care a wee bit about the detentions and loss of points. "What is it that you have found out Draco? It has to be huge for you not to care about detention and the loss of points," and as Draco looked up sharply at Nott and relaxed a second later when he continued, grinning all the time, "Well, are you going to tell us or what?"

Draco grinned, "I will tell you in my own time. Okay, leave it for now." Shaking himself of the thought that had been running through him all day, he got up asking what had happened and he came to know Harry and Zack were still in the infirmary and would come to classes the next day.

That the Headmaster had used Black magic on Potter was the topic of the day and it only confirmed Draco's suspicions that there was no love lost between Harry and the Headmaster. He had to be careful while talking to Potter and the others.

At that point Kent walked in and went straight to Draco, "Hey! Are you quite all right?"

Draco nodded his head, "I am quite all right. I just felt like taking a day off, that's all. These people are making a big thing about it." And, calmly went on to ignore the indignant sputtering of his friends and their rants about loss of points and their sneers about his detentions.

He watched Kent quite closely and saw nothing untoward in his behavior that night. The next morning, Harry and Zack walked in, this time with Neville, Ron, Dean and Seamus, Hermione and Ginny.

Draco watched carefully as Harry scanned the first years and looked straight at Brent for a second and scanned the Hall carelessly before smiling at Kent, who was grinning like a fool.

"Hey! David how are you doing?" then turning to Draco, "Is the offer to sit at your table still open?" seeing Draco nod in the affirmative, Harry and the others sat down at the Slytherin tables.

"How did you persuade them?" asked Draco interested as yesterday all of them had called Harry and Neville mad.

"I did not say a word. They just walked down here with me."

"So what happened yesterday?" this was a loaded question and judging by the sudden silence everyone, even the Gryffindors wanted to know about it all.

Harry paused for a minute. He had to reply carefully and in a manner he would bring them closer to him. Then he shrugged.

"Dumbledore using Black magic is not new. When I was taken by people to Potter castle, I found out that he had placed a blood call on me. It could not have been Voldemort as he tried telling me, as the call was active and Voldemort's dead. He tried to break my mind yesterday and Zack here unconsciously got dragged into it and I used his strength as well to push the bloody Headmaster out.

"Otherwise, I could have lost my mind and I am sure that is what he wanted. He had better give me not only an apology but also promise me this type of thing will never happen here not only to me but also to others."

Ron, Hermione, Ginny and the others looked extremely disturbed at this new piece of information and the Slytherins looked very thoughtful.

"But he is Dumbledore, Harry. He killed Grindelwald for us and he is the Leader of the Light. He would not cast something like a blood call on a small baby." Ron was very disturbed and it showed on his face and in his words.

"Yes I know Ron. I can swear on my magic on this and anything. Can he? I don't think so. I was with my aunt and uncle who hated magic and put me in a cupboard under the stairs till I was rescued. I did not even know magic existed till then and I was told my parents died in a car crash, drunk and that they were good for nothing unemployed jerks that quite deserved to go."

Harry's voice was shaking a little and Draco while shocked as were the others, noticed the rage that was burning in two pairs of eyes as they listened to Harry.

Ron and the other Gryffindors were flabbergasted. What was Harry saying? "Then are you saying Dumbledore deliberately left you with such cruel people. Oh! Harry." Hermione was distressed.

Harry shrugged again. "See, no one knew that I was there except Dumbledore, because my aunt told me that I had been left on the doorstep of their house in the night and she found me when she came out to get the milk."

"What!! You mean you were there on the door step all through the night." Dean was looking at Harry incredulously.

Harry nodded. "Yes, I never knew that my parents; especially my Dad was very, very rich. I believe my Dad came from one of those old type of blooded families, if you know what I mean?" all of them nodded their heads, Ron a little wistfully.

"I could have stayed in my own home you know, with the elves, I would have been so much better off. I have a bloody castle for Merlin's sake and here, for the first nine years of my life I did not own a stitch of cloth to call my own. My aunt always gave me her son's cast offs, even my knickers were his old ones, shrunk to my size and here I found that even if I buy a new pair of knickers everyday for the rest of my life, I would still be spending loose change.

"And I can't believe that he has the gall to say he kept me there for my own good and all this would strengthen me." Harry sat back and watched the others. The Gryffindors were all very shocked even Ron. If you could not enjoy the money and you ended up wearing someone else's knickers, it was a bit too much for him and he found his jealousy ebbing away.

The Slytherins were shocked as well though they did not show it openly.

"The Potters were really old, old family, Harry. The elves would have died rather than harmed a hair on your head. If you lived the way you say you did, then you were certainly better off living with the elves." Draco carefully chose his words.

“I know now. From the time I went home to my castle, I studied and studied and increased my knowledge and stroked my magic to get stronger by working almost non –stop till I came here. I decided that no one would treat me like the Headmaster and the Dursleys in the magical or the muggle world.”

“Why did you come here? You could have stayed put where you were and remained safe?” asked Neville tentatively.

“Ah! Yes I could Nev, but I wanted to show the world what Dumbledore is all about. All of you think he is Merlin’s gift to our world, but a man who places a blood call on a baby and uses Black magic openly in school, well, there is something fishy isn’t there, and I thought I was entitled to know and also let the world know when I found out.

“He has looked so good that if all of you had not seen what had happened yesterday in the Hall, and then listened to Pomfrey confirming it as Black magic and the other professors also stating it, tell me how many of you would have believed all that I just said now? You would have called me ‘mental’. Come on put up your hands.” He finished, smiling.

All of them just stared at him.

“I don’t know if any of you have been affected by him as I have, but I have and I am not going to just brush it away simply because I have got out of that horrible existence. My life has been miserable till I was rescued and who knows if I had not been rescued, I might be still slaving away at the Dursleys getting trashed by my uncle just because I performed accidental magic that confused and scared me in the first place.

“I don’t know why he is doing all this but I am going to find out and if I find he is not what he says he is, well I am going to do my bit to take care of Albus bloody Dumbledore.”

The power and the determination in Harry’s voice showed the caliber of wizard they were dealing with. Zack spoke for the first time since that morning. “Well count me in, in whatever you are doing as the feeling of pain and that way he was battering into your brain and the

way it extended on to mine makes me terrified to say the least. I was sent here because this was supposed to be the cleanest school that does not even teach the Dark Arts. Now I am not so sure.”

Hermione suddenly asked the question that Draco had wanted to in the first place, but had forgotten. “Who rescued you?”

“That is one thing I cannot tell you Hermione as I have promised them, yes it was more than one person that I will not reveal till they say so as they are still members of this world and they feel Dumbledore would destroy them if he came to know of their identities. Sorry.” Harry smiled regretfully.

Draco was listening to all this and he knew without a doubt that Harry hated the Headmaster and the other thing was that he had to take it to his father. There was something very big and he did not know or understand the equation very well. He knew his father would be displeased if Draco would not tell him about the Boy-who-Lived’s dislike of Dumbledore, who in turn hated the Boy-who-Lived more as he tried to use Black magic to destroy his mind.

It was all getting confusing for Draco and judging by the looks of the others they were confused as well but one thing had emerged. Dumbledore had lost his respect and standing in the school and once the parents’ came to know of this he would lose respect in the wizarding world as well.

The next two days went with many curious questions from almost all the students from all the Houses. Harry answered every question patiently and properly without being offended by any question even when some of it bordered on the disbelieving and the rude.

But those were not many as everyone had seen the Headmaster curse Harry.

Draco wrote his father but he said only those things that everyone would write to tell their parents. He made no mention of what he had overheard to anyone as he was still in two minds about it. He decided to wait and watch on that.

When Albus finally came to the Great Hall in time for dinner apparently all refreshed, he found the entire Hall had grown silent. To his chagrin, Harry stood up and giving Albus a contemptuous stare, said clearly, "I will not sit in the same room as this man unless he apologizes publicly for using Black magic on a student and promises never to use it on anybody else in this school.

"Yes, he told me it was a mistake, a mistake but I want this assurance in front of all of you." He started walking away amidst a deathly silence, when Zack slowly stood up and walked behind Harry.

The next to his surprise was Kent from Slytherin and he was followed by Longbottom, Granger, Ron and the Twins and Ginny Weasley, Thomas, Finnegan, and almost the whole Gryffindor table and when it looked as if they would be followed by the whole school as Draco and the others were already walking with Kent, Albus called for Harry.

"Harry," roared Albus looked sternly at Harry. "I have spoken to you about this just a few hours ago. What do you mean by stirring up a rebellion like this young man? We don't do all this in this school."

"Yeah, you only cast Black magic, Headmaster." And watched with satisfaction as Albus flushed with anger and banged his hand on the table, making his dishes fly out and fall on the floor.

"I wanted you to apologize to the school at large as you have misused your authority and no one knows just what you might have done in the last so many years as Headmaster. Well, Professor, *I know*, and I expect you to tell all of us that you have never done anything like this and you never will."

Albus almost exploded in anger at the words. But the words had made an impact and the damage had been done. Albus swallowed his anger and fury and had apologized to the school for a mistake, and that he had only been trying to help Harry to rid him of an alien presence he had found in Harry's head and by doing so had unconsciously confirmed all that Harry had said about him.

Unfortunately, Peter had told him only a portion of the rumors that had spread around the school about him, if he had known that Harry had been giving information about his life with the Dursleys, he would

have been shocked and a little bit scared and definitely would not have given the apology that went all the way in blackening his name forever.

The end of the week saw the other schools arriving and the names of students that Albus had not planned to announce be made the School champions.

On Sunday Voldemort was complete. Albus decided to call the death eaters gradually, by slowly activating their dark marks. To be able to use the same marks was one of his better plans that succeeded. He had torn Voldemort's mind for the information on the mark and had been able to use the same mark.

From Sunday night, all the death eaters started feeling their marks burn, slowly getting darker. That week – end saw the escape of more than thirteen prisoners who had been held in Azkaban on charges of being death eaters.

That news had shocked the Wizarding world to the core.

“Harry,” whispered Snape in his mind, “see the papers.” Harry opened The Daily Prophet to see the news printed in bold letters.

### **THIRTEEN DEATH EATERS ESCAPE AZKABAN**

And the story of Bellatrix Lestrange and the others and the crimes they had committed were listed below in horrifying detail.

Harry frowned. Hadn't Nicholas told him Voldemort was dead? Then that meant Albus was involved. He probably decided to come back as Voldemort and kill Harry and he, Albus could escape the blame. What a wonderful plan? Snape agreed. It did look like that and he had decided to free the prisoners to give Voldemort more support.

He glanced up to find Albus looking at him with a frown on his face. Harry smiled at him and Albus frowned more as if displeased with the audacity Harry was exhibiting.

Harry looked back at the paper and wondered if the death eaters knew they were fighting against Dumbledore for Dumbledore. Harry



decided to think deeply on this and talk it over with Snape and the others before acting on this. He had to try and do something that would turn the tables on Albus.

Albus made sure he did not come near Harry and waited for all the others to forget what had happened with Harry. They did forget, but Albus knew one incident would bring back all the memories. He had to be very, very careful.

Over the next month Voldemort slowly extended his hand of terror in the wizarding world. At first there were random attacks and then the word spread that he was going to hunt and kill Harry Potter for keeping him in his spirit form for almost fifteen years. He apparently had waited for all this time only for Harry to emerge and now he would kill Harry and fulfill his revenge.

The attacks on half bloods and muggle borns started taking place. Albus however left the group who had supported Harry strictly alone. He would deal with them one by one, randomly.

Halloween approached and with it came the Triwizard Tournament. The four boys and one girl, who were participating in it, grew tense as the days grew closer to the big day.

The Triwizard Tournament fell on a clear day, and the winds were just getting chilly. The fifteen participants went to the center amidst loud cheering from the students and a large number of parents who had gathered to watch the students fight their way in the maze.

The maze itself was huge on the outside and inside it had been expanded magically to five times the size with the beautiful cup placed in the center of the maze.

There were fifteen entrances to the maze and there were various obstacles that one had to overcome in order to reach the cup that stood in all its glory in the middle.

All of them stood tense at their gate and waited for the signal to go off, they were allowed only their wands.

Draco was quivering with anticipation as he entertained thoughts of him holding the dazzling cup high on his hands and waving to the students. He smirked, that would make him get the respect of Potter. He frowned, from where had that thought come up from? He sighed. He respected Potter just for the fact he took Albus Dumbledore head on, and it would be wonderful to be respected by him as well.

Sirius and Snape were tense and they had created a link through an ear ring on their left ear for this Tournament. They would be able to speak with each other and Harry had created a link with Remus and Sirius by wearing an ear ring too. That had started a fad and most of the students went with an ear ring in one and some in two ears.

Diggory and Hermione were shivering with excitement and Diggory loosened his muscles and Hermione went through all her spells from first year.

Beauxbatons had fixed their hopes on Fleur Delacour and another girl called Claire Dupont, while Durmstrang had their champions in Victor Krum and Silas Banten.

The signal went off in the form of green sparks from Barty Crouch's wand and all of them walked briskly into the maze. They had a variety of small and not so small hurdles to cross and all of them slowly made their way to the middle.

Two girls and one boy from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang fell first with in ten minutes. Then another twenty minutes later another two girls from Beauxbatons and two boys from Durmstrang were out of the Tournament.

Sirius was the first to fall from Hogwarts as he encountered ten boggarts who took the shape of dementors his worst fear, Azkaban and his own sense of betraying James by handing over the secret keeper to Peter. He kept trying the Patronus charm thinking about the years he spent with Harry and his School life with James. But the boggarts refused to move though they stalled and then came after him again. That was when Harry reminded him to try the '*riddikulus*' spell suggesting they may be boggarts.

Sirius tried and as he drove the ones in front of him, the ones from behind overpowered him and he fainted and bowed out of the Tournament.

Diggory was the second to fall as he was hit by a blast ended skewt and really there was no way he could get up and move.

The rest of them valiantly waded their way through so many obstacles. Snape encountered a dragon that just would not stop breathing fire, even when he had bound it and blinded it. No amount of *augamenti* was enough to let him pass and he finally conjured a cork and clamped the dragon. It gave a hiss and fizzled out making Snape curse colorfully and run through.

Draco had to battle boggarts, grindylows and other creatures before he was in sight of the cup.

Hermione had a hippogriff who kept bowing and when she bowed tried to jump on her scaring her to run back. Every time she came near it the hippogriff would try and jump on her as she bowed.

Frustrated she pointed her wand and hexed it as it turned around to attack her once again, with a stunner and a *petrificus totalus* and wished she had thought of stunning and freezing the animal instead of wasting so much time bowing and scraping.

All the contestants were evenly matched and all of them neared the cup at about the same time and then it was a mad rush to reach it first. All of them ran like crazy through the opening and eight of them were going to hold on to the cup at the same time, a feat that had never happened in the history of the Tournament.

The three students from Hogwarts gave the little bit extra and Draco seeing the boys from Durmstrang a little closer than him conjured a barrier to stop them. Though it took only a minute to break the barrier, that time was enough for Draco to by pass them. He did not see Snape and Hermione run from the other side of him as he had been concentrating on the boys. The veela from Beauxbatons was a little behind and so Draco did not bother.

The boys from Durmstrang were catching up and Draco heard his left arm crack by a curse thrown in anger by Victor Krum before a searing pain went through him and he just dived blindly towards the cup.

But that was what Hermione, and Snape egged on by Harry was also doing and all the three Hogwarts students desperately dived to the cup and held on to it at the same time.

Then next second the three students were not there. The whole school went into a panic as they realized that the cup was a portkey and three of Hogwarts students were now elsewhere.

Albus was happy. This was one thing that had succeeded as he had thought of it only in the last second and had turned it into a portkey as he was walking with it along with Barty crouch. He had cast a notice-me-not charm on the cup and had made it into a portkey in about ten seconds, talking all the while about the rise of Voldemort, and it had been an easy job to alert Voldemort to be ready as he could do it through the mind.

The three students found themselves in a dark graveyard and Harry yelled to Snape to jus comeback. Snape was about to hold his portkey and take himself out of there when there were sounds of apparition and a thud indicating Draco had fallen to the ground. Hermione was clutching on to Snape and when Draco fell down, she gave a half scream and turned to help him.

*"Emendo,"* she whispered as she saw his hand hanging at an unnatural angle, and Draco's arm straightened with a sickening sound that almost made him pass out from the pain but then the moment passed and so did the pain.

"Thanks," he muttered as he flexed his arm and found it mended properly. With Snape in the middle and Draco and Hermione on either side of him, the three of them backed slowly, till they were by the cup that was lying harmlessly on the ground.

"Keep together and stay together, all right?" whispered Snape as he tried to hold both of them and activate the portkey once more ashen had been stopped by Draco's fall and Hermione's scream.

The portkey refused to function. That put Snape, Harry, and the others into a state of panic. Harry concentrated on his mind link with Snape but he could not tear the wards of Hogwarts and leave. That said only one thing. The portkey was prepared by Dumbledore to go through the wards.

‘Sev,’ Harry whispered urgently, ‘I cannot break through Hogwarts wards to get to you. The cup is our only hope. That will act as a portkey back here from where you were taken as it has been created by Albus to take you guys from here. Hold the others and get the bloody cup, Snape!’ he finished with a yell, splintering Snape’s head.

Snape gritted his head and he tried to get the cup that was on the floor without being obvious and Harry realizing he had yelled and probably flustered Snape, literally poured calm into his mind easing the headache that he had brought on in the first place by yelling in Snape’s mind.

The figures made themselves visible at that time.

“Well, well, well, what do we have here? A mudblood, a wizard of unknown origins and a pureblood, come Draco see where you are and who else is here.”

Hermione trembled and Snape was trying hard not to. A tall thin figure had emerged from the shadows and had its cloak thrown back and its face was a pale ghostly white with malicious red eyes and slits for its nose. Lord Voldemort. He had no hair on his head and he looked repugnant, ugly and absolutely nauseating.

Lucius Malfoy stepped out as did Bellatrix from the circle of death eaters.

“Draco come, bow down to our Lord.” Lucius Malfoy’s voice held a warning and Draco knew he should have bowed to his father’s master the minute he saw him. Shaking visibly and terribly afraid, he walked up and bowed to Voldemort.

Voldemort lifted Draco off the ground with his hands and grinned at the others maliciously. He put one finger on Draco Malfoy’s chin and lifted his face towards him.

“Lucius we shall see if your son is up to being worthy of being a Malfoy and the son of my follower. Draco, are you willing to do as I say?’

“Yes my Lord! Your wish is my command.” Both Lucius and Bellatrix nodded approvingly at the words Draco had spoken in a low but steady voice.

“You are going to kill the two of these wizards Draco and of course you need not worry as I will send you back to Hogwarts safely and you may tell everyone I killed them and you just managed to escape. Now if you want to play with them a little bit in any way, you may do so, I will understand and enjoy the show.” He let go of Draco and stepped back to watch both the boy and the proceedings in general.

Draco was desperate as he knew it was the two of them or the three of them. He took a deep breath and sent a crucio that just missed Snape. He walked closer and looked into Snape, opening his mind and pleading for him to do something as he shot another crucio at Hermione that hit her straight on.

She screamed and screamed till she could no more, when Draco took off the curse, still looking at Snape and begging him. If this was Snape then Draco knew he was their only hope of getting out from there alive. Hermione slowly sat up and holding on to Snape was desperately trying to lift her self up.

It was at that time he felt the information pour into his head and never had he felt such relief in his young life. He sneered at Snape, “Well Zack, this is it. I am going to kill you at point blank range.’

Draco was almost touching Snape, and Hermione was now standing by Snape’s side, holding on to him and pleading with Draco not to do this. Suddenly Snape put out his hand, caught hold of Draco and pulled him so that he was standing in front of Snape.

“Accio cup” was all that he said and as the cup came zooming to him, ten *avada kedavra*’s also came towards them. But they were a second late as Snape’s actions had taken them completely by surprise and by the time the curses came flying to the place where they had been standing, they had vanished. The deadly killing curses

went and hit the other tombs and there were a lot of broken stones and frustrated cries as a result.

A second later they were in Hogwarts and all of them were safe. Harry, Sirius, Minerva and Nicholas as well as the other teachers ran to them and Minerva and Nicholas and Harry levitated the three of them and went to the infirmary with Sirius using the sonorous charm to make way for the injured students.

Draco and Snape had their eyes tightly shut, while Hermione had fainted. Albus came hurrying to the infirmary, where Zack told them what had happened. Albus tutted in the right places though he was furious inside as the deaths of these two students would have made a point that no where was safe and more importantly he had badly wanted to kill all those who had got up and sided with Harry.

As Minerva and Williams glared at Draco, he flushed, "Professor I had no choice as he would have killed all the three of us."

"Well all of you take rest and I will talk to you tomorrow. You are not to worry Draco, it is as you said and bravo my boy. You have been truly brave."

The moment he left and Harry secured the doors and casting all kinds of wards and privacy spells, ran to Draco and hugged him as Minerva and Williams looked on.

"You saved all of them and did not buckle under pressure. I am so proud Draco and I owe you big time." Harry grinned as Draco almost fainted in shock.

End of Chapter – 14

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## Chapter – 15

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Draco was dumbfounded as Harry hugged him and before he could say anything, he had let him go and had removed the wards and as Draco looked on, he saw Pomfrey come in swiftly, with the anti – *cruciatus* for Hermione who was just waking up. By then all the Griffindors were clustered at the doors and waiting anxiously.

They had been milling around the infirmary and were there when Harry had locked the doors and they peered worriedly when the doors opened suddenly and they were able to see inside. All of them were relieved to see Hermione and Zack were safe and were already beginning to curse Draco as wild rumors spread fast around the students.

The Slytherins had also joined the Griffindors and they were now peering into the infirmary. Then Ron and Theodore Nott sent away everybody except Harry's dorm mates and the Slytherins of that year. Both of them glared at each other.

Harry hurried out wanting to diffuse the situation. He started before Ron could speak, "Ron, Theodore and all of you come in quietly. Draco was ordered to kill Salazar and Hermione by Voldemort. Otherwise Voldemort threatened to kill him and his father. He was going slowly towards them when Sal simply accioed the cup and grabbed both of them and got them here. Stay here with us and be quiet for Merlin's sake."

All of them looked at each other and not believing entirely Harry's hurried words, they went in silently not minding Pomfrey's hissing about leaving.

They were silent and simply looked at the three on the beds. Kent ran forward as if to check on Zack and then stopped abruptly and looked at Harry and then turned to Draco and stood with the other Slytherins.

Draco's head was spinning as he could not put his thoughts together. Harry had hugged and thanked him. How did he know what Draco had done? How could he have known what had happened at the



graveyard? If any of the Slytherins came to know about it and word got to his father, he knew he was a dead boy.

He saw the Slytherins coming in and turned desperately to Zack and whispered his name. When he turned to look at him enquiringly, he let his thoughts on covering up for him, known. Zack nodded once. Draco turned away relieved.

A minute later Lucius Malfoy strode in looking furious. The others from Slytherin greeted him and the Griffindors stayed silent. Harry was watching carefully as was Zack and Sirius. Harry quietly went to Hermione with the pretext of checking up on her and bent down and whispered to her.

"Hermione, please keep silent and don't say anything till later, all right?" she nodded, confused as to why Harry was asking her to be quiet, when she was not going to talk in the first place, but willing to listen to Harry all the same.

Lucius Malfoy did not return anybody's greetings. He looked straight at his son in a way that promised retribution. Zack immediately gasped and at Harry's nod so did Hermione and Zack pointed him out to McGonagall and said in a choked voice, "He was there, professor, with HIM at the graveyard." Zack trembled visibly.

"Brilliant piece of acting Sev," smiled Harry in Snape's mind, and received a smirk back in return.

Lucius Malfoy glared at Zack and spoke contemptuously as Narcissa Malfoy came in hurriedly.

"You must be insane, boy. Where do you think I was and with whom?" and there was a definite threat in his voice. "Back off Sev." Warned Harry and Snape fell silent shaking just a little bit to show he was afraid and Lucius turned to Draco, who was being fussed about and spoken to in very low tones by his mother.

"You do not have to take that attitude Mr. Malfoy. Zack and Miss Granger have returned to us from You-Know-Who's hideout at some graveyard and if Zack says he saw you there and he has already told the Headmaster that he saw you in death eater garbs and egging

young Mr. Malfoy to kill the other two students, then we believe him. I will speak to the Headmaster and stop the likes of you to step into this School.”

Minerva was furious and with her wand in her hand and ready for anything, she looked at Lucius Malfoy as contemptuously as he had, a minute before at Snape.

Lucius simply sneered at Minerva, “And what did this....boy say?” The insult was deliberate and challenging in his voice, daring her to respond. At that moment Albus entered the infirmary and stood by Minerva, looking at Lucius.

“That you were with He-who-must-not-be-named in the graveyard encouraging your equally evil minded son who did not hesitate when he was asked to kill two students of his age and class. The reason, he tells us is that he was forced to by Him, otherwise he would have been killed along with them. And now Mr. Malfoy I must ask you to leave as I consider you a danger to this School and her students.” Now the challenge was in her voice, daring him to ignore her concerns.

Lucius Malfoy flushed for a moment amazed at the courage and audacity in McGonagall’s voice and he was just going to tell her what she could do with her concerns, when he noticed the other students and the Headmaster standing there and listening closely to everything.

“I have already spoken to the Minister and though it is none of your business *Professor*, one of my elves stole my hair and gave it to a death eater to impersonate me, once HE knew my son was going to take part in the Tournament. It is very unfortunate it has happened and that elf has been dealt with, though I must reiterate it is none of your business.”

Minerva flushed with fury as Albus smiled inwardly. He had hastened there when he knew Lucius Malfoy had come and had wanted to know how he would escape the accusations. Well, Albus thought smilingly, he had done admirably.

Lucius was sneering at Minerva, "Is that enough or perhaps you want more? It not, I would like to speak to my son who had been through a horrible ordeal, being ordered to kill his year mates or loose his life and *mine* as he did not know it was not me at the time."

And saying so, he went to Draco's bed, not waiting for an answer and drew the curtains around, casting silencing wards all around.

Albus shook his head sympathetically at Minerva, "It seems that no one is safe from that monster, Minerva. Come, we shall go and talk to the people and calm them down, come James, you too, the boys will be fine here." And ignoring Harry and the others he led the way with a fuming Minerva who was shocked that Lucius could just waltz in after speaking rubbish to the Minister, who was definitely a fool to listen and believe.

Lucius meanwhile was hissing with the same amount of fury that he displayed towards McGonagall, if not more.

"Stupid Draco, you were very stupid. You left yourself open by going so close to that boy and allowed him to take advantage of you. Incredibly idiotic and the dark lord was merciful only because you cast the cruciatus correctly and showed your intent by wanting to kill them. Otherwise," Lucius trailed off, looking angrily at his only son.

Draco looked downcast and carefully made sure he did not look at his father in the eye. "I am sorry father. I just thought of taunting them, I never thought that blasted boy would do what he did. I am so sorry."

Lucius sighed as his mother stroked his hair. "I know, Draco. After all you cast a perfect *cruciatus* on the girl."

"Father, may I ask you something? Something controversial, and may I have your assurance that you will not be angry with me?"

Lucius glared at Draco's rather frightened face and then catching Narcissa's eyes warning him, sighed, "Ask me Draco and I will try to answer it to the best of my knowledge."

"Father, first I want to tell you I am with you all the way. I would have proved it tonight but fate and sheer dumb luck saved them. While all

of us are the most loyal to the Dark Lord, why does He think it prudent to kill without meaning? Killing the boy or even Granger does not serve us well and it only makes all of these ignorant people think ill of Him. McGonagall is an example of that.”

Lucius's face was showing increasing anger by the minute and he took out his wand to the horror of his son, “How dare you? How dare you question our Master? You forget yourself, Draco,” when Narcissa stood up and spoke so softly that even Draco had to strain his ears to hear, “Luce, explain to him and correctly so that he will not be confused or swayed by others. By shouting and being outraged, all you are doing is turning him away.”

Lucius glared at his wife and was about to say something very cutting to her, when she just looked straight at him and kept staring at him calmly.

He sighed once again. The boy had touched on a very sensitive issue for which he had no answers. All he knew was he and the rest of the death eaters had no hope and no salvation and not only them but generations after them were ill-fated to serve the Dark Lord.

“I will say this only once, Draco, as it not even safe for me to utter these words to you. Even your mother has understood it only by reading my mind and your aunt Bella's mind.

“All of us joined the Lord to keep our world safe from the muggles. Albus who leads the so called Light and so many of the muggle borns who followed him wanted to share our world with the muggles. Not all muggles, but those who are related to the muggle borns and those whom we marry.

“For example, Granger knows about our world and she should as she is a witch. But there is permission for her, if she chooses to do so, to reveal to anyone that she is magical and that there is a world that is as different from the muggle world as can be.

“The Lord opposed it and demanded that apart from the witch or wizard and no one should be privy to that type of information as we are so few in number and the muggles who outnumber us like ten thousand to one could annihilate us if the information fell into wrong

hands. That is why almost all of the pure bloods including the Potters, initially stood by us.

“They later left when out Lord was willing to kill in order to make our claims known. We all knew he had a hunger for power and we allowed it because that was his driving force and we also allowed ourselves to be marked. But the mark that we were told we would bear and the, mark we received were totally different.”

His already low voice still went down a few decibels till he was whispering, “What we received was a total and an absolute bondage Mark and we unknowingly not only pledged ourselves but also our line, Draco. You know what that means. Till He is there all of us will have to serve, you, me and your children and so on.

“And then, all of a sudden he changed, he became more vicious and he had no intention of doing anything for us. Till the Potter boy gave us a reprieve for the last fifteen years. Now he has risen and we,” here Lucius’s voice choked in plain emotion tearing at a horrified Draco’s heart, “have no choice, child. Please do not stray. Your mother and I cannot bear to lose you. You know that Draco.” The last came as a warning and a plea as Lucius removed the wards and sneering at the others, left as swiftly as he came, nodding once only to Narcissa.

Narcissa spent a few more minutes stroking Draco’s head, not that he was aware of it and then with a whispered, “remember your father’s words love, and be careful,” was gone as swiftly as her husband, looking neither left nor right.

All Draco wanted to do at that moment was to cry, howl and scream at the unfairness of it all. He knew how much it had cost his father to tell him he and the other members, who belonged to the most important and old families, were no better than slaves and worse than muggles he had mocked at all his life.

He cringed at that thought and the feeling that not only his father, but him and if he married and had children were bound by the curse of a man who according to his father had changed and by his words and implications, not for the better and with no intention of saving the wizarding world by protecting them against the muggles.

Well, it was all too much for him to take and ignoring the concerned queries of his House mates who were still there and anxious glances of Harry every few seconds made him feel more miserable and he just pulled his blankets over his head and waited for all of them to leave.

He had been thinking he was better than the best of them and he knew his father and others had been truly fighting a war for making their world safe and he had placed, like all of his friends whose fathers were in the service of the Lord, the harshness of their actions as necessary and impossible to avoid in a tug of war with the Ministry and the Wizarding world at large.

Now, it seemed as horrific as all of them were no better than slaves and could be made to do anything for generations to come without respite. He knew the Dark Lord had taken precautions against death in any form, it was indeed proven as he had risen once more. Now he understood the relief his parents had felt when they discussed the fall of the Dark Lord. He had always thought his father hypocritical and selfish as he discussed with the others about the Dark Lord but now he understood.

Stubborn tears that refused to listen to his will and mind found their way down his cheeks as he lay there for he did not know how long as he thought and re-thought what his father had said. He slowly slipped away into blessed sleep, still thinking about his father's bitter words.

Draco was awoken the next morning after a night of restless dreams to be awarded the Triwizard cup that he shared with Snape and Hermione. She was fine, though not looking at him. He felt miserable as he thought of the curse, no the unforgivable he had hit her with. That was only the beginning and he shivered as he thought of all that he might have to endure in the years to come.

That day all the students sat at their own tables, and were quite subdued. Draco was surprised at that, since Harry seemed to understand, he had thought that Harry would remain friends with him. But it was not so, as apart from the thank you Harry had to even look in his direction and he miserably hugged himself to ward himself against the cold that was not so much in the air as it was inside him.

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Harry and the others had been worried as Lucius and a few minutes later Narcissa had left and Draco, who seemed to be in a state of shock, had simply pulled his covers over him and did not come back into the land of the living till he was woken up by Pomfrey the next morning.

He had seemed so shocked and seemed to be somewhere else, that Harry had decided to give him the space for a day before thanking him and asking him what went wrong with his father that Draco looked as if the world had come to an end and he had also informed Hermione what had happened and how Draco had saved their lives and not to breathe a word of it to anyone even Ron, till Harry said so and relaxed only after he received her assurance she would keep quiet.

“But Zack, how did he do that? What branch of magic is it and how did you know that and how mmpghf?” Harry had placed his hand over her mouth and said, “Later, Hermione when you are better and when Sal is better too.” She kept quiet reluctantly telling him she would remind him and he must tell her.

Harry watched Draco the whole day and Sirius also told him that Draco was not talking to anyone and he was behaving like the walking dead.

That evening Draco after what he thought was being ignored by Harry, decided to confront him and also beg Harry, if necessary about helping him find a way out of the mess he and his family were in.

Harry almost at the same time decided to confront Draco about just why he had been going around like a zombie and Harry at dinner asked Sirius to ask Draco to a deserted room in the North Tower that was a special room warded by Nicholas for any meetings Harry might want to have.

Harry then slipped out with Snape following a few minutes later. Then five minutes after that saw Draco and Kent slipping out of the Great Hall. Harry was waiting in a room nearby and he was about to greet Draco, when he saw Peter scurrying after Draco. Harry took aim and

hit the rat with a stunner and a powerful sleeping charm and left him where he had fallen asleep.

He greeted Draco and the four of them walked up to the meeting room. Harry and Snape conjured up comfortable chairs and all of them sat down.

“You looked so scared and sad after your father left, Draco, I thought I would give you the space you so obviously needed before talking to you to thank you. What a brilliant idea you had and if it weren’t for that Sal and Hermione would have surely been killed. As I told you I owe you.”

Draco thought only for a moment. Then the words came tumbling out. He blurted out what he had asked his father and the answers he received in return from him and then he placed his final request.

“I need your help Harry, what my father and the others joined Voldemort was for a good purpose and once he marked them they had no choice to leave and no other choice to follow. Please help me and my father and the others.”

He still did not mention his overhearing their conversation that day in the infirmary lest Harry thought he was threatening them and decided to use that information as a last resort if Harry refused to give his help.

“You have the power to stand up to Albus Dumbledore and you could resist the blood call and the Black magic. You must do something. Please. You said you owed me big time. Save us and all of us will owe you forever. Please.” Draco’s voice broke on the last word and he turned his head away to hide his tears that were once again making a mockery of his scorn of crying.

Harry went and hugged him from behind and so did Snape and Sirius. “Hey you don’t have to worry. Just wait patiently till the winter holidays and we will act. We cannot do anything now for reasons I cannot mention. I will reveal all to you at that time and I will do so after our holidays start.”

“We will be away for the holidays. And what if He wants to mark us at that time?” Draco asked in a very shaky voice.



“On the second day after we break up, all right. Now tell me the names of all those whom you think are following Voldemort like your father, because they don’t have a choice?”

Harry, Snape and Sirius asked a variety of questions and soon Harry and the others had all the information at his fingertips.

After Draco left Harry called for Remus, Nicholas, McGonagall and Perenelle and they talked well into the night uncaring of what might be thought of their absence. However no one really knew as Hermione knew they had gone to meet up with Draco and she made sure that no one would ask for Harry.

Draco did the same for Sirius in the Slytherin common room and no one noticed Remus was not there as he had already gone to bed and had been pretending to be asleep till he was called by Sirius and he came with Lily, straight from his bed.

The next three weeks before the winter vacation flew and Draco felt cheered by the fact Harry had a plan. Sirius had confirmed it to him the next day; though he did not tell Draco what or how things would shape up, it lifted Draco’s spirits a little.

Soon it was winter and Albus had made it a point to attack as many muggle born families as possible. Harry, though he did not know of Albus’s plan was advising all the muggle borns to go under the Fidelus as soon as they could. He made Hermione start off on it as if it was her plan so that Peter would not read much into it and also put him to sleep whenever he deducted his presence with Ron.

So Peter not having any information that was proper and only disjointed bits and pieces of information here and there as he kept falling asleep all the time did not tell Albus half the things he should have.

He put it to the snugness of Ron’s robes and did not think much of it.

Soon it was time to leave for the winter and Harry and all of his friends left for the holidays. Harry had asked Sirius to tell Draco to be ready for anything, words that put Draco in a right state of excitement. Sirius had given a parchment to write in if he had any information; he

said Harry would read it in his home in its match that Harry had with him. He asked Draco to write only if Voldemort called the death eaters on that very night.

Draco wrote back any way saying all death eaters were to come on Mid-Winter's day with their children and that Voldemort would mark all of them who were over fifteen years of age. Till then the death eaters were not needed.

Lucius Malfoy and his wife were fast asleep when they were woken by a trill. Lucius woke up with his wand at the ready to find a beautiful phoenix staring at him trilling softly. A second later there was a shriek that brought Draco running in with his wand at the ready. Only to have his mother shouting incoherently that his father had vanished. The next second the phoenix came back and Narcissa took wild shots of, before she too, was taken away along with Draco who also latched on to the bird he knew was Lily.

They were deposited at a place that Draco had never seen. It was a very small cottage that looked as if it was falling down from outside. Lily dropped them down at a spot where he and Narcissa were automatically stunned and then he knew no more.

End of Chapter – 15

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## Chapter – 16

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Nicholas and Perenelle had been very busy in the few weeks leading to the winter holidays. They had acquired a small cottage in one of the very small islands in the Outer Hebrides and had heavily warded the whole island. Then they had added a complicated charm that would slow time there and then with another magic subduing spell on the chairs they had conjured and placed in the cottage, everything was in place.

Outside the cottage, Nicholas had marked two circles in which he placed a small pipe each, and had charmed it to fire stunner spells at anyone who would land within the marked circle. Sirius had been tickled to find out about it and had laughed long and hard about the automatic stunning spell pipe as he called it.

Then Harry, Nicholas and Perenelle set to work as Snape, Sirius and Remus along with McGonagall and Turdin who had come there to watch the show, watched with wonder as Harry chanted in Parceltongue and they in an ancient language that none of them recognized, continuously for more than four hours, before there was a bright glow that was dark green in color and completely enveloped the marked circle meant for the death eaters.

Then on the night of the first day of the holiday, Harry and the others sent out the phoenixes to bring in all the others. The members of the Order went in one circle and the death eaters in the specially created circle that Nicholas, Perenelle and Harry had made for them. The death eaters, once stunned, were applied a special potion that would interact with the spell cast by Harry, Nicholas and Perenelle and keep the mark ineffective till they left the cottage.

The Order members simply had the stunner and then they were levitated by the elves to the room inside the cottage that was magically expanded. It was a big room with two 'U' shaped tables that faced each other.

Near the window, towards the center of the room was a podium to stand and speak to the whole room. It was to this room that all those who were brought were held.

Harry was standing on the small podium and Snape, Sirius, Remus, Nicholas, Perenelle, McGonagall and Turdin were sitting behind the members of the Order.

Those who had been brought from the side of the Light were the Weasleys except Arthur, Mad-Eye Moody, Hestia Jones, Dedalus Diggle, Nymphadora Tonks, Kingsley Shacklebolt, Amelia Bones, and Emmeline Vance, Augusta Longbottom and Neville and Hermione Granger.

The death Eaters were the Lestranges, the Malfoys, Dolohov, the Zabinis, the Parkinsons, Rookwood, Mulciber, the Crabbes, the Goyles and McNair.

All of them were bound to their chairs and also had binds on their magic so that they could not fight with wandless magic as their wands had already been taken off them.

They were then enervated by Harry and the others in the room fell silent, waiting to see all the reactions when the members of the Order and the death eaters would find themselves in one room on opposite sides and all of them sitting ducks and none of them able to do anything about it.

They were not disappointed. All of them were simultaneously enervated and all of them blinked for a minute and took another minute to get their bearings right, and then the third minute went in looking around. That was when the chaos started.

“What the hell?” that was Moody who was yelling, his magic eye rolling furiously in his head and he was struggling to overcome the binds and was cursing profusely in the process, the curses growing more and more vulgar as his efforts showed no success.

The other Order members were struggling too, as were the death eaters who were cursing more violently than Moody. Bellatrix was actually frothing at the mouth as she, and the others were twisting

and turning in their chairs, straining their magic to the utmost to undo the binds that were holding them so securely.

Draco Malfoy also started struggling instinctively before he saw Harry grinning at him, nodding his head and then he became calm and started watching the fun. He also gestured to Blaise, Pansy and the other death eater children who were also whisked away along with their parents to keep silent and nodded to Harry.

All of them gasped and Pansy shrieked as she saw Harry there, but seeing Draco calm, she too calmed down.

Hermione was the only one who saw Harry at once and she fell silent at his nod and sat back as comfortably as she could under the circumstances and watched all the others struggling around her.

It was Bellatrix who saw Harry standing in the middle and grinning at the scene in front of him and she yelled at them, catching the attention of the others, both death eaters as well as the members of the Order.

“Potter, you bloody boy, you, you... wait till I get up,” she screamed, deafening the others next to her and then all of them started off yelling, shouting and demanding to be released and threatening dire consequences if Harry did not untie them.

Neville caught sight of Bellatrix and he flushed with anger and struggled harder to remove the binds. But they were cast so strongly that they held firmly.

“Potter!” yelled Moody on top of everyone else, “Will you first let me free so that I can at least capture all of these death eaters here and then you can tell us why you got us here?”

“Stupid idiot,” screeched Bellatrix sneering at Moody, “Can you not see, One-Eyed ass? The bloody boy has brought all of us as well as all of you and has placed magical binds on all of us? Maybe, Potter is trying to take over the world. How the hell did you manage to get around our wards and get to us?” she glared at Harry as she finished, panting with the effort of removing the binds.

Harry decided it was time to stop the racket that all of them were creating humorous, though it was. Cutting through Bellatrix's yelling and Lucius Malfoy's hissing and the Crabbe's and the Goyle's grunting, he yelled, "STOP IT, all of you. Just stop it for a minute and listen to me. And then I will remove your binds and hand you your wands."

The last sentence was mistake as it started another round of fury as death eaters and Order members shouted as one as they realized their wands were also not with them.

Harry flicked his wand once and suddenly the whole room was quiet as he had silenced everyone in the room. All of them were still shouting, though, without any noise.

"Now," he said grinning at their snarling faces, "If I may speak for a little while, all of you will understand why you have been brought here and what is it that I would like all of you to know."

"All of you know about me and who I am, but none of you know why I did not attend the School for four years and why I have come now."

"I was placed with my aunt and uncle for the first nine years of my life and after that I was taken to my home, the Potter castle, where I spent the next six years in studying, studying hard for almost twelve to fifteen hours a day." He began, and all of them started falling silent as they turned to him to find out the reason why they were here and how all their wards had been overcome to bring them.

As they fell silent, Harry removed the silencing charm he had placed on them and continued, "The Potter line as you all know is an old one. How old it is and from whom it started is something that is not known to anyone except a very few persons.

"I was however ignorant of all this till I was rescued. The person who rescued me was a man called Severus Snape along with two other persons. He had become tired of the killing and the raping that became mandatory in the Dark Lord's service some fifteen years ago and ran to Dumbledore to offer himself as a spy. Knowing the nature of the mark, he had taken a lot of precautions while he did so and

offered a pledge to protect Harry Potter the son of his childhood nemesis at any cost to prove his sincerity to the Headmaster.

“While he did this at that time in an act of desperation, Dumbledore accepted him and started using him as a spy.”

“Serves him right that he died the way he did and what do you know about the Mark?” Bellatrix said viciously glaring at Harry.

Harry smiled. “Snape did another thing that was to change the course of my life after nine years as well as all of your lives today. He wrote my mother, telling her of his promise to save me and assured her he would do anything to help.

“My mother was one of the most brilliant witches of all time. She could see auras and she was intelligent enough to know about people. She saw enough when she was in Hogwarts to realize that two persons were not what they were thought to be by the general public.

“She saw Dumbledore’s aura often wandering at places where it should not be, like the girls bathing rooms and hovering over groups listening to conversations. The other was Peter Pettigrew.”

“How dare you, boy?” Augusta Longbottom was looking fiercely at Harry, “How dare you talk about the Headmaster like this? Untie me at once and let me take care of the creature that is sitting half a room away, that is responsible for the fates of my son and daughter-in-law.”

Bellatrix sneered, “They are better off now, old hag.” She laughed at the old lady who was enraged as she heard those words. Harry cast the silencing charm once again and told them he would not remove it till he finished this time.

Harry ignored all of them and continued, “Once and only once she saw the Headmaster and Peter conversing and though it struck her as odd, she pushed it back and almost forgot about it.

“She married James Potter almost after School and after that she came to know about the history of the Potters and the origin of their line. Robert Potter was a muggle born wizard who lived a thousand years ago. A few days before the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and

Wizardry was opened for the very first time, he an orphan and all alone in the world, just walked into the School.”

Harry now had the attention of all of them in the room. “He did not know about anything called magic, but the fact he was able to see the School and the fact he confirmed that he had had odd things happening to him at times told the Founders’ about his magical ability. He was ten years old and came initially looking for a job.”

“He was sorted into Slytherin and married the daughter of Gryffindor, Marisa. The Potter line as it is today begins from there. Robert Potter bonded with the man who took care of him and whom he thought as his father in all ways including blood as he went through a blood ritual to become a Slytherin and also received the gifts of Parceltongue and other gifts that Slytherin bestowed to the boy he thought of as his true son.

“The children of Marisa and Robert were even stronger magically as they were the descendents of two of the greatest wizards. The Potter castle was a wedding gift from Slytherin and Gryffindor to them and till this day it is warded with the magic of the four Founders’ and the various Potters themselves.

“Now I am going to show you two memories that will tell you about why you have been brought here and why I have been speaking to the death eaters and people I don’t even know about my family history and its origin. Once you see it for your selves, you will realize the extent to which all of you have been manipulated.”

Harry with drew two vials that held the copies of the memories of his mother’s discoveries and Nicholas and Perenelle’s discussions with them about Albus Dumbledore.

He removed a shrunken pensieve, placed it on a small table that he conjured, and poured the memories into that. He turned to all of them who were still under the silencing charm and taking his wand, “I, Harry James Potter swear on my magic that all I have said so far is true and what I will be showing now is also true.” And waited for the magic to swirl around him and settle down before flicking his wand once and starting the memories to play out.



All of them watched as Lily Potter rose up out of the pensieve to tell Snape about Dumbledore and Molly broke through the silencing charm, bringing it down to cry aloud, a shriek that told every one that she had lost some one very close to her.

And as the memories rolled on and came to the part where the Flammels told Harry, Snape, Sirius, Remus and McGonagall about the evil that was Dumbledore, Harry had no need to remove the charm he had cast to silence all of them. The sheer outrage and horror broke the charm of almost all of them there and Harry removed it for the rest.

"He was Heifer? He must be burnt alive for that and for the rest..." Moody was so shocked he was unable to continue.

"Exactly what I said, Alastor, Albus should be killed for the atrocities he committed as Heifer alone. To think I was prepared to die for the man, thinking he was our savior." The bitterness had not dropped a bit from Minerva's voice as she replied to Moody.

"Mr. Potter, are you trying to tell me that it was Albus who ordered the fate that my son and daughter-in-law are going through now?" Augusta Longbottom's voice was very faint.

Harry's nod brought tears to her eyes and Neville who was sitting with her was staring at him with shock. Then with a roar he turned to the Weasleys and struggled with his binds furiously.

"Neville," shouted Harry and as he turned to look at Harry with an expression of sheer hate that Harry knew was directed at the Weasleys, "None of them know about Arthur. You saw him speak to Albus and Peter did you not? And for another thing, their auras are clean."

The anger and hate slowly died down in Neville's eyes as Harry turned to the Weasleys where Molly was weeping and her children were trying their best to comfort her.

"Mrs. Weasley, I almost thought of not bringing you here," Harry was cut off by Bill, "You did the right thing Harry. All of us here were so righteous and so full of anger at the world that is, because of

Voldemort and now we find our father is instrumental in every dark activity that there is.” As Harry opened his mouth to explain that Arthur did not know Voldemort was Albus, Charlie continued, Bill had not been able to say more.

“Yeah,” he said bitterly, “A great solace it is to know that he did not know Voldemort and Albus are one and the same. So what? How many atrocities has he committed? Oh Merlin! Harry, he was directly responsible for your parents’ deaths and here we were proud to be poor because we were honest, clean and good.” His voice broke on the last word as he struggled to control his raging emotions.

“Harry,” Molly said tearfully to him, “our family owes you a debt that we can never fulfill, as the head of this family was directly responsible for the deaths of your parents and grandparents and for keeping you in a place where you would not be treated well. All of us and at least,” she broke down and then gathering herself continued, “I can say my children are all good kids and we will do what ever you say for however long to repay a debt that we caused.”

“I won’t accept your pledge Mrs. Weasley, because you did not do any harm to me at any point in my life. I will not accept this. Give me your friendship and give me your hand in peace and we will bond, but not this, I will never accept any of you to pay for something you had no idea of till now.” Harry was firm and it made Molly choke with grief and Harry patting her gently, and nodding to Ron, who was trying his best to keep his tears in, turned to the death eaters.

It was a completely different story there. There was no crying and no yelling. No one not even Bellatrix was saying a word and all of them seemed to be deep in thought, though shaken to the core of their being and completely turned inside out.

“You are a Slytherin? Then why did you father and all of them before him acted as if *your* House was fit only to be destroyed?” asked Rudolphus Lestrage.

“Well they never knew the story of their ancestors till they reached the age of 17 and became a legal adult in the wizarding world. By that time they were so established in either hating or ignoring Slytherin, they left it as it is.”

Turdin who was listening to all that was going on interrupted to tell all of them, "To say you are the heir of Slytherin and Gryffindor attracts all kinds of attention, some good, but mostly bad and none of the elder Potters wanted it. Who ever knew it kept it to themselves." shocking the Order and the death eaters in the process that Harry had the goblins on his side.

"Is Voldemort really dead?" at Harry's nod Bellatrix continued, "What happened to Snape, Sirius and Lupin?"

"They are right here." Smiling he called to Snape, Sirius and Remus. "They took the de-aging potion to come to School with me to protect me against Albus, if he would try something. And they did when he used Black magic to destroy my mind. McGonagall also knows and Nicholas disguised him self to join as the new Potions professor, James Williams."

Lucius gasped as the other three came and stood by Harry's side and Harry introduced them, "Zack! You were the boy at the graveyard."

"Yes Luce, I was and it was because of Draco all of us were able to escape. Else we would have got away, but it would have meant other repercussions."

"Draco?" the one word was sharp and Lucius turned to look at his son, frowning.

Draco gulped and was hesitating, when Harry stepped in to the gap and told Lucius about Draco's help and his own request to Harry to help him and his father and how it was Draco who gave him the names of all the death eaters who were forced to follow because they had no choice.

Lucius blinked at that and looked long and hard at his son but did not say anything.

"Remove these binds, Potter. I swear to you we will not do anything. We need to be free to make decisions and tough ones at that." Bellatrix demanded as she once again flexed her arms to undo the bloody binds that just would not come off.

Harry silently flicked his wand and all of them in the room were free. None of them left or even got up, though.

Nicholas in the meanwhile had been speaking to the members of the Order and he now took the stage and Harry, Snape and the others went to sit down.

Nicholas clapped his hands for attention and getting it this time in a second, smiled at all of them. "Now that all of you know the basics of what is happening in our world, we will now hopefully get together to do some work that will actually benefit all of us.

"Before that, however I will need an oath from all of you on two things. One you will never reveal what you have heard here to anyone and two, all of you will swear to work together, putting your differences aside for the betterment of our world. Those who do not agree to these two things, kindly speak up now so that we may oblivate you and send you back."

In the next half hour all of them had given their oath freely and then with hot cups of tea and coffee, they sat down to discuss the next step. Bellatrix started the conversation as she along with Lucius Malfoy had been appointed spokesperson for the death eaters and she did not waste a minute.

"We joined the Dark Lord because he promised us he would keep our world secret and safe. Once we took the mark we had no choice as we became little more than bonded slaves to him. That is one reason I did not bear children and most of the others too, did not have more than one child, as we did not want the endless bondage to continue. The fearful thing was the fact we could tell no one. I am assuming that you have placed some ancient magic here to prevent any knowledge of what is happening here through the marks?"

Lucius continued as Nicholas nodded in affirmation to Bellatrix, "after we took the mark we became slaves and not only us but he ensured that our line would remain as slaves to his whims. We had no means of fighting back and we could not warn anyone as if ever word got through to him it would make us long for death."

“Lucius is absolutely correct, Mr. Flammel. We were his to manipulate and his to order about. And manipulate and order he did, not your Albus, he came later; I am now talking about Voldemort.

“We were asked to kill, and commit all kinds of atrocities and my wife and I decided never to bring a child into the world in which we were living, created by our own folly, you may say, but at that time we thought we were following a leader whom we thought would lead us from the darkness and into the Light. Bellatrix has knowingly aborted to avoid our child suffering the same fate as Luce’s son or the others’ children here.” Rudolphus was very bitter and very sad.

Bellatrix was bowing her head down, obviously struggling with herself. It was strange to see a woman whom everyone had thought insane and cruel to even possess feelings let alone those of repentance and sorrow.

She slowly lifted her head, “Flammel, we Slytherins were not perfect nor were we living in a fool’s paradise. We knew at that time the road to accomplishing our goal was long and very narrow and if we encountered any obstacle or trouble we had to destroy it in order to move forward.” She glanced for a half-second at both the Longbottoms who were glaring at her before she continued.

“We were ready to kill for our cause and endure hardships and even be treated like criminals, only Flammel we wanted to do all this *to those who would oppose us in the same way and because we honestly wanted our world to remain secret.* But, unfortunately we became tools and were used by a madman who used our goals and our willingness to fight to the death for those goals to bind us to him and made us do things that I can proudly say we would never dream of, if it weren’t for the mark.” She looked at the Longbottoms once again and left it at that.

“Now that all of you have a fair idea of what was going on and let me tell you it is the first time that all of us have ever discussed this with each other. I have not spoken to Bella about it so far nor have we discussed it with Lucius or Narcissa. I wish to know if the mark will work in the same way now Voldemort is dead and do we have to

obey Albus like we did Voldemort?" Rudolphus asked savagely in his voice.

Bellatrix, and the other death eaters whom were silent, looked up sharply at Rudolphus's words and Rabastan Lestrangle spoke just as savagely as his brother, "Albus belongs to us Flammel, us, the death eaters. He will not be killed and he will live long to pay for his sins. He has taught us many, many things and while all of you on the other side think you have been betrayed, remember, it is all of us who have suffered the maximum as he used us to do all his dirty work, all of us who belong to the best of the wizarding families and are as pure blooded and powerful as they come."

All the death eaters shouted in affirmative as Rabastan Lestrangle finished saying his bit with a ferociousness that was frightening. Harry who was watching all this was also taking to Snape in his mind.

"Well he has a point doesn't he? Voldemort and Albus have done far more damage to them than they have to us. We are the victims no doubt about it but they are the victims too and in a way that they would be hunted by everyone for the rest of their lives as well as their own conscience would be killing them every minute."

"You are right Harry," Snape said sadly in his mind. "I ran to Albus because I could not stomach half the things Voldemort made me do and like Bellatrix, I too, never even thought of marriage let alone children simply because I refused to bring another person into the mess that my life was. Not that some one was panting all over me mind you, but even then," he trailed off feeling miserable about so many things, Voldemort, Albus, the sick mess that his life was.

Harry hugged Snape hard and whispered comforting thoughts to him as he felt equally sad. "It will be all right you will see Sev, you will see and you will be able to make a life of your own too, you will see, I promise you, I swear..."

Both of them stopped their conversation and turned to the conversation that was still going around.

"How will I be able to face Arthur?" Molly was asking Perenelle softly, the tears still pouring down her face. Her world had come to an end

and the life she had lived for more than twenty five years with a man she had thought the sun rose and set on was now a sham and she did not know how she was going to pick the pieces up and get on with her life.

“Perhaps we should not have told you anything, but Nicholas was insistent as Harry has sworn on his mother’s memories to do as she said and all of us felt that if you came to know of all this much later, it would destroy you more, dear.” Perenelle’s voice and face was very troubled and she knew and felt the anguish Molly and her children were going through at this moment.

To her surprise it was Ron who spoke up, his face all flushed and signs of tears still on his face and his words were final as the entire family endorsed them. “Madame, we are poor and we have felt it at one time or the other, but we held our head high as we were taught all through our lives about honest and upright living that Mum has been drilling into our heads and now we find that it was only Mum and her brothers who were like that. Not our Dad.

“We will show to all of you that our Dad may be a criminal but our Mum has brought us up very well and we will stay with you and by doing that we will try and reduce a little of that huge debt we have to repay to the Wizarding World.” He stopped as he could not go on, but it was enough as all the Weasleys agreed with him as one.

Hermione, who was nearby and totally shocked to hear the events unfold before her, ran to Ron with tears in her eyes and hugged him hard. “Who needs to be rich in cash Ron, all of you have so much of wealth where it counts, in your hearts and your honesty and above all in your willingness to face the cruelty of fate and still be willing to correct it. You, all of you Weasleys are stinking rich Ron and don’t you worry you have all of us to come with you and help you.”

All the members of the Order agreed and all their firm support was what held Molly Weasley and her children together without breaking.

Neville was sitting in a state of shock with his grandmother weeping. It was her hate and her wish for revenge that she hoped and prayed that Neville would carry out against Bellatrix that had kept her going

all these years with her son and daughter-in-law being insane and as good as dead for the last fourteen years.

Now it looked as if Albus had ordered the hag, no she thought bitterly, *Bellatrix Lestrange* to mind rape her son and his wife and make her and Neville suffer by it. But what did he gain by it though? She did not understand, unless they had found out something about him that demanded they be taken care of. She turned to ask Nicholas Flammel about it, but he had gone to the center and was asking for attention.

Nicholas once again went to the small podium of sorts and clapped his hands asking for silence. "We have much to do, much to decide before we disperse and we must not waste our time in what might have been as it has already come to pass. What we must make sure is that what has happened will never happen again."

End of Chapter – 16

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## Chapter – 17

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“Flammel, before you begin, may I ask you to ask *her* why my son and his wife were targeted in the first place? They were members of the Order and would have given their lives for the cause all of us were fighting for?” Mrs. Longbottom’s voice was strained and she looked as if she was on the brink of a massive collapse, which she was, but was trying her best to accept so many things naturally so that Neville who had a huge burden already would not have one more person to worry about.

Bellatrix did not look at the aged lady or her grandson who was hovering in concern and alarm over his grandmother. Talking directly to Nicholas she started, “My husband and I,” and Neville and his grandmother looked up at her words listening and trying to make sense of everything, “were ordered to torture both of them into insanity, but to keep them alive as a warning to the members of the Order. I don’t know more than that and I could not really ask.”

Augusta Longbottom wept and Neville sat next to her, comforting her not realizing the tears fell from his eyes too, as he thought of the Headmaster whom his grandmother had always spoken of with awe and respect, was the man who had made his parents like they were today.

Bellatrix looked at her husband and they seemed to conversing mentally, before agreeing on something and Bellatrix cleared her throat for a conversation with the matriarch of the Longbottom family that was not a string of insults.

“Longbottom, while there is no cure for the spell I was told to cast, it was not the cruciatus, it was another Black magic spell, and I can provide you with a partial antidote, a potion that will restore their sanity. They may not get back their full magical strength at least not that I know of, and may not be as we were at their age, but they will recognize others and will be able to lead a normal life and as far as possible.”

The old lady, who had looked up at Bellatrix as she addressed her, trembled in hope with the words that fell from her lips provided. The others stood in shock as they listened to the conversation that was taking place. Neville stood up from where he had been bending over his grandmother and walked up to Bellatrix, who was frantically searching for her wand and then cursed in frustration as she realized it was not with her.

Those who had their wands with them had pulled them out and readied themselves to stun Neville if he tried to hit Bellatrix. While all of them knew he had the right to punch her in the face for cursing the Longbottoms, Nicholas knew the real blame laid elsewhere and he would not allow the fragile truce that was now prevalent in the room to be broken.

But Neville did not do anything like that. He went close to her and knelt down and folding his hands, tears running down his eyes said, "Please!"

To say Bellatrix was shocked was an understatement. The boy had come to ask her to help, help when he could have ordered to and she would have done it just to be in this group that had given her a hope, a tiny ray of very dim light that was vaguely visible so, so far away. But this boy was begging and she realized how much he was hurt and wounded and the extent to which he had longed for his parents' cure, to have a semblance of normalcy in his life as well as in theirs.

She had been living a life that constantly shamed her, but all this time it was the jobs she had been forced to do as a death eater. For the first time she felt humbled and she was amazed it was not Harry Potter, not the Flammels but a boy who was almost a squib and a boy who was laughed at by everyone and who was ignored and pitied by one and all, that would make her feel this way.

"The fourteen years I was in prison were the best years of my life since I joined Voldemort." She said softly not looking at the boy who was still kneeling down in front of her. "I felt relieved that I would be punished for my acts in this life and start afresh in my next, praying that I be born magical and be given a chance to undo some of the bigger mistakes I have committed in this life.

“I find today, I have been given a chance to redeem my self and my family’s name by atoning for my sins, though ordered by Voldemort and Albus, were mine to bear as I did not die refusing to do what I was ordered to do. Now this time I will not waste this opportunity that the Great Goddess has given me and I will and here I am talking about each and every person gathered here who was a death eater, to do what all of us can to undo all that we have done.”

Looking at Neville for the first time she said, “I will make the potion that will restore the mind and once they regain sanity, we can see how much they have recovered and then take it on from there.”

Neville did not say anything. He nodded at her once and went back to his seat, to comfort his grandmother who was hugging him fiercely.

Amidst the pin drop silence with only the sound of Mrs. Longbottom’s soft crying Bellatrix spoke again, “Flammel, all of us death eaters have sacrificed so much for the sake of keeping our world secret and away from the muggles, who if they got it into their heads could lynch us. Before we go any further, you must tell us where you and Potter are on this.”

“We are with you all the way on this,” as Hermione started to protest hearing this, Nicholas held up a hand, “No Miss Granger, I do not mean your parents’ but the right you and your parents’ have today, to speak about magic to anyone you like so long *you* are confident will not harm our world. But there is no restriction on you or on your parents’ to keep silent about this.

“If you so wished you could reveal about our world to any one and if they decide to harm us, well, there is nothing we would be able to do against it. That is a law that must be passed, Miss Granger and all muggle born students must take an oath and all their parents and siblings and relatives who know about our world must be magically made sure, they will never reveal about our world to any one.

“Information in the wrong hands will lead to far worse problem than those we are facing. We cannot forever be in a state of war or suspicion, my dear as it would ruin us from within.”

Hermione reluctantly agreed and they went on with the discussion.

“On our side Bellatrix, we want fair and equal treatment for the muggle borns and all magical creatures being given a right to live along side with us. Let them have representation according to their numbers and let them be present in the Wizengamot and let them stand trial for any wrongs they do commit.” Nicholas started the arguments that went to and fro for a long time and it was a good thing they were in a time bubble.

“What! Give equal rights to the half breeds and allow them to stand as one with us Flammel? You are mad if you think us or the wizarding world would agree with such a mad proposal, where are you coming from?” Bellatrix was incredulous.

“Yes Bellatrix, I do think so and kindly hear me out before you start your arguments. We need them as much as they need us, the vampires, the werewolves, centaurs, elves and goblins. All of them make up our world. You want to be superior to them, fine Bella, but you work at it and attain that superiority.

“These creatures are somewhat like you death eaters now. They are people without a choice and you are taking away their right to live. How fair is that? Instead all I ask for them is a seat or two, not even on the percentage of their population, if you do not agree to it, and allow them the right to live, now they have the right only to exist and how can you justify that by any means, please tell me and if you will come up with an explanation that is fair, I will listen to it and vote for it.

“Another thing about making this law is that it would make the rise of people like Voldemort and others who harp on blood superiority to stop and think, as these people whom we call creatures will also be on the Wizengamot and it will not be able to do away with them so easily and future Dark Lords’ will have to destroy the whole system before they can take control and we all know how difficult that will be as goblins, elves and the others will not be so easily done away with.”

“Flammel,” began Lucius exasperated as Nicholas put forth points that were logical and not so hard to implement and consequently hard to argue against, “How can you say that, no offence to you Mr. Turdin, we at the Wizengamot should provide seats for half breeds and other

magical creatures? They are different from us and they do not follow our customs or traditions and they are not wizards.”

For all these people to accept the other creatures into the magical community meant a decrease in their superiority and that more than anything scared them. Nicholas understood this and he was patient.

“That is the point Lucius. They are all different from us in many ways and I give you that point, but all of us have a common meeting point and that is magic. Just like the muggle borns who are so different from us till they are sent their letter, these people too, are different from us. But like with the muggle borns with these people too, the common ground is magic.

“If we want to protect our community and our world, we must accept that these people are necessary to us and their well being is important to us as well. Unless we close the chasm we will not have true peace and this chasm must be closed by law and passed by the Wizengamot.”

“They will interfere in our matters, Flammel and slowly start overcoming us? Have you thought of that?” demanded Rudolphus angrily.

“No, of course they will not unless it overlaps to them like this war is doing. Albus as Voldemort has already started wooing the werewolves under Fenrir Greyback and has sent word to the goblins he would like their support as well. Now these creatures as you call them are directly involved in our world and in our war and their actions will interfere with our world and have a direct bearing on us.” Nicholas was firm.

After hours of arguing between Nicholas who was after a while assisted by Perenelle and McGonagall and the death eaters, Bellatrix finally gave in very reluctantly, “Well not more than one seat per community and an assurance they will never ever interfere in our affairs and for any of their trials, involving wizards they will conduct it at the Wizengamot and hold their other trials by themselves with a report to the Wizengamot about it. Also a right to pass minor laws for these communities if the need arises by us that must be followed.”

“You really want to hold the whip don’t you?” asked Turdin wryly.

Bellatrix smiled at him, a true and a non malicious one. “You must realize Mr. Turdin it is only a part desire to control. More than half of our concern comes from fear because we do not understand and you of all people know if the werewolves or the goblins or the elves so decide, we would be in as much danger as we would with the muggles. It is self preservation under the guise of superiority that has made us react violently towards you and keep all of you down under us always.”

Turdin smiled at her and nodded her head. “You have a point. But instead of oppressing us I truly feel allowing us to live in peace would be far more beneficial. Today we are with Potter and in fact if Mr. Snape had not agreed to Mrs. Potter’s request, we were planning to kidnap him on his eleventh birthday, make him Head of his House and emancipate him and then train him to take all of you down starting from Albus. We agreed because the Potters have always treated us like equals and have always fought for our rights and thrown their lot with us over the ages.”

The death eaters as well as the members of the Order were astounded to the extent the goblins were prepared to go to protect one of their clients just because their family had been polite and nice to them over the ages, not minding the consequences that would have arisen if it had come to light that a wizard especially the Boy-who-Lived had been abducted by the goblins. It would have meant war and the fact they were prepared to accept the consequences silenced the death eaters more than all the arguments that had preceded this revelation.

They concluded this business with a magical oath, where both parties agreed on behalf of all those present to make sure they will strive to make this a reality once Albus had been taken care of.

“How will these people be able to come to the Wizengamot and talk and vote and decide if they are wanted men and women?” Hermione was curious about the oath all of them had taken to make such sweeping changes, while all of these people were death eaters who had escaped from Azkaban and were some of the most wanted men and women in the Wizarding World.

Nicholas smiled at her, "Good question Miss. Granger. These people will not come to the Wizengamot as the moment they step in they will be kissed. What they will do, what they have promised to do is to use their seats that all prominent families have, that means families that are old blood, like the Lestranges, Potters, Malfoys, in fact almost all of them here as well as new families that have achieved a level of social standing, in the Wizengamot and vote to pass these laws. All of them here will use their lawyers to do this and will not *oppose*. That is the main thing."

Then the talk turned to Albus and the mood turned nasty.

"First we must rescue the Longbottoms from St. Mungo's, feed them with the necessary potion and then take it on from there. How long will it take to make the potion?" Moody asked gruffly. He had been largely silent except for a comment here and there as had been all the members of the Order, though they had been observing very keenly.

"At least six days, if I am not interrupted." Bellatrix said, meaning if she wasn't called by Albus.

"Then we will wait for those six days. Once you leave here you will not be able to talk against Albus as he has somehow blended and bound the mark and its properties to himself. Your oath that you gave a little while before would protect you from his Legilimency and I am afraid that till we are able to find a way to remove the mark you must do as he says.

In skirmishes and attacks all these Order members and aurors led by Madame Bones, Moody, Shacklebolt and the rest will not harm you, but you must be careful of the others." All the Order members nodded in agreement.

"How are you working with the mark?" Lucius was curious to know.

"Harry, Perenelle and I have viewed the memories of Snape as he took the mark and Harry has told us the spells that went into making the mark. We are now in the process of finding an antidote, though it is proving elusive and difficult."

"You know," said Rudolphus, "There is a chamber in Hogwarts that belonged to Slytherin. He kept a pet basilisk there to initially guard and protect the School. It would leave by another way out to the Forest for its food and it had orders never to attack till Slytherin or his decedents commanded. Voldemort somehow convinced her to obey him.

"In the chamber there are hundreds of books in Parcel tongue as well as other languages. If we could somehow overcome the basilisk that now has Voldemort's standing order to kill anyone other than him to step into the chamber, and take over the chamber may be we could find a remedy for this there." He finished with hope in his heart.

This was new as Nicholas knew of a chamber he had not known where it was and the fact that there were many ancient books that may give a clue about the mark, excited him greatly.

"Do you know where the entrance to this chamber is?" he asked Rudolphus who nodded his head.

"I have been down there with him, Flammel. There are two entrances. One is through a narrow passage way from the lowest dungeon in Slytherin. Only once he took us through a sink in the second floor unused girls' bathroom."

"Time to make Albus ill once again." Nicholas was smiling at Perenelle and Harry and both beamed back at him, Harry nodding his head violently, making him laugh.

"Why don't you just poison him outright and be rid of him forever?" asked Harry hopefully.

Nicholas laughed aloud at that. "If I could don't you think I would have done it long ago Harry? I have told you about horcruxes haven't I? That is one thing I have no clue about. We cannot afford to have him go underground if he has created horcruxes. It would be better to have him where we can pin him down at any given moment. Remember Harry, we have no information about him till I started tagging him, and even after that there are many holes and gaps where I do not know what he has done and till we do, to disturb him would not be wise."



“First we make the Potion, then we make Albus ill and also make sure Arthur,” he looked apologetically at Molly who bowed her head down, “and Peter are otherwise occupied and give the potions to the Longbottoms and then go to the chamber from there and then we will see. Is this plan all right or does anyone of you has changes to make?” asked Nicholas looking around at the others.

No one had anything to add and so Nicholas asked the phoenixes to take them back one by one telling them the moment they leave the protections of the cottage, the mark will work as before and that they should take care.

He also gave them all small pieces of parchments in which they could write him and told Bellatrix to write as soon as the potion was ready. He bound the parchments to their magical signature so that even if they were taken away no one else could use it to write wrong messages and being a parchment it would not matter if it were destroyed by chance.

He did not say anything to Molly or the Weasleys knowing it would be cruel to ask them to act as if nothing had happened. He merely asked them to be careful not only with Arthur but also with the rat and let them leave. The oaths they had taken would not let them tell anything to Arthur and if they wanted to fight using other pretexts, he would let them be.

“All of you are to act as if nothing has happened.” She ordered her bewildered children who nodded their heads knowing that look was not to be disobeyed. “Nicholas when we go back, what shall we say to Arthur when he asks us where we were all this time?” Molly surprised Nicholas by her words.

“You are in a time bubble and I have stunned the rat and Arthur as soon as you came here and both of them will not wake till you go back. You need not worry that Arthur will notice your absence tonight.” He reassured her.

Molly had been thinking all this while and not for anything her whole family was frightened of her when she had a certain look on her face. While that was for minor irritations and bad behaviors indulged by the

younger members of her household, this was big and had totally shattered her world, her love and her beliefs.

But she had a strong upbringing and while she had lost the man she loved and had worshipped for the last so many years, another thing that had devastated her was another betrayal that she could not forgive Arthur for.

She had lost two of her brothers and her father in a war; she had thought was fighting for good over evil. Today had changed all that as she had found that they had been murdered by the same people, whom they had been fighting for, giving their lives for a cause that was a sham and one of those people who were responsible for their deaths was her husband who had stood by their bodies as she wept, in a false show of grief.

It was an hour before all of them had left and those who remained sealed up the cottage and repaired to Potter castle. All of them flopped down anywhere and there was a silence, a comfortable silence as all of them thought back to the strange night that was. It had gone beyond their expectations and now they had to wait for the potion to be completed before taking on the next step.

It was exactly six days later the first message came to Nicholas that brought a lot of cheer and happiness to all of them at Potter castle. Harry, Snape, Sirius, Remus, McGonagall and the Flammels were all there for the Yule holidays and the message was received with great celebration.

The Yule festival when Voldemort would mark the youngsters was barely four days away.

The message simply read 'finished the potion, ready for the first step'.

Nicholas replied saying, 'wait for Lily, Harry's phoenix to come to you at eleven tonight, expect *you* with the potion.'

Bellatrix arrived at cottage that night with the potion and her husband. They silently handed over the potion and waited for Nicholas to speak first. Nicholas smilingly thanked them and taking them along with him left with Lily to the Longbottom's home. Mrs. Longbottom was there

outside the wards with Neville, both of them wearing a look of hope that was heart wrenching.

She saw the Lestranges along with Nicholas and looked at them for a long moment and then silently keyed them in. They went inside, they would stay here with Mrs. Longbottom and Neville while Harry and Perenelle along with Nicholas would bring the younger Longbottoms from St. Mungo's and then they would be administered the potion.

Nicholas handed over the potion to Bellatrix and left when he got Perenelle's signal. He silently apparated to the hospital and by passing the wards went to the place where Perenelle and Harry were waiting for him. Harry had also learned to apparate through the wards and he was there to help in case of any trouble, not that they expected any.

All three of them cast invisibility charms on them and went silently to the permanent spell damage ward. They would have turned the knob on the door in a second when, suddenly Nicholas was hit by a stunner from behind and Perenelle and Harry immediately threw themselves on the ground, Harry whirling around as another stunner whizzed towards Perenelle. There was no one and Harry quickly used his aura sight to see five black auras crouching towards them when four rays of green light came fast towards them. *The killing curse.*

There was no way to beat all four of them, the only reason they were not dead was the distance from where the spells came from, the other end of the long corridor. Harry quickly conjured four blocks of stone that were smashed to smithereens a second later by the beams of light hitting them.

Perenelle had revived Nicholas by then and Harry in the meantime had conjured a huge anaconda that he commanded to attack. But, whoever it was was well prepared for them and they banished the huge snake a second later.

Three more silently cast killing curses sped their way and Harry rolled out of the way of one of them conjured a snake to take one of them and Nicholas diverted the third to hit and shatter the glass on the window. To their shock, there was no sound and there was no body

else who was there. What was to be a walkover was slowly turning into a nightmare.

Harry was puzzled as he kept blocking the killing curses that kept coming, all the while trying to get in a curse or two of his own. But none of them were successful in even hitting the five attackers who were staying right at the end of the corridor. Why didn't they come he thought as he called for Snape in his mind.

As he was fighting he was telling Snape and asking him why they were not coming closer. Snape had panicked when he heard there were attackers, but almost calmed down at once, knowing it could harm Harry's concentration from fighting.

Snape told Sirius, Remus and McGonagall and it was McGonagall who shed light on who those attackers might be. She remembered Albus telling her he had placed what he had called the Light's response to the Dark's inferi, that would simply attack without remorse any one who would dare come to the Order headquarters during the first war.

These were creatures that would spring to life when their target would cross an invisible line or attack after a certain time in the nights, specified beforehand by the person who created them and they would fight fiercely. She did not know how to overcome them, though or if they were alive or dead creatures. Snape relayed it to Harry who was dismayed by this information as he did not know what these were and how to get rid of them.

He sent four stunners one after another to one attacker and immediately sent a parcel spell to check if their attackers were alive or not. Two stunners were banished by it, the third and fourth hit it without any effect whatsoever that was frightening to see, and it was terrifying when the parcel spell said 'no life'.

That was enough for Harry and he rolled out of the way of one killing curse, deflected another and glanced at Nicholas and Perenelle who were also fighting furiously, Nicholas was beginning to send dark curses and Perenelle was using the severing curse aiming at their necks. But it was no use at all as those things were not affected by anything at all.

Harry sent two combination spells *inflamare along with explodo* at one of the them and watched it deflect one, the second that came whizzing at it less than a fraction later hit it on the chest and it exploded and faded away. Harry now sure of himself yelled his findings to Nicholas and Perenelle and ten minutes and four explosions later, they were safe.

Harry assured Snape, Sirius and the others who were having kittens in Potter castle that all was well and went inside. All the patients were sleeping peacefully. This time the three of them were cautious and not wanting a repeat of what had happened in the corridor checked the whole room and left Perenelle to stand guard in the corridors.

Harry and Nicholas went slowly checking through their magic every minute for any hostile presence and very soon, they were at the foot of the Longbottom's beds. Both of them were sleeping peacefully and Harry was standing by Mrs. Longbottom's bed and Nicholas by Mr. Longbottom's.

Both of them looked at each other and simultaneously checked the area for traps, wards and other presence. To their shock, they found many wards and various beams of red light that crossed each other surrounding the whole area above the two beds were.

Harry and Nicholas went to work, dismantling the wards. Nicholas used his mind link with Perenelle to tell her of what they had found and both Harry, who was having a running conversation with Snape who along with Sirius was growing more panicked as each second went by, and Nicholas went ward by ward, taking them down slowly.

It took more than two hours and then after the last of the wards were torn away, both of them heaved a sigh of relief. "Sir, it seems the Longbottoms had found something very important for them to be imprisoned like this." Harry was raging at some of the wards he had dismantled. They were spells infused with the so called protection wards that would continuously dull the mind and make it scared of everything.

Nicholas nodded his head. "I only hope they will recover a little at least. Neville and his grandmother would collapse other wise." He added sadly.

They went to the beds and once again Nicholas and Harry checked for magical wards and heaved a sigh of relief when they found nothing more. Nicholas called to Perenelle and Harry with Mrs. Longbottom and Nicholas with Mr. Longbottom vanished a second later. Perenelle waited for a few minutes more and as soon as they left, started the clean up of removing traces of their magic and after completing it vanished as well.

Both Nicholas and Harry apparated into the Longbottom residence and were met with the relieved cries of the others there. "What happened? Why were you so late? We have to go before someone other than the group calls on us and find us missing." Bellatrix was distraught.

Nicholas levitated them to their bedroom and placed Frank Longbottom gently on the bed and turned to watch Harry do the same with Alice Longbottom. He then turned to the others and told them briefly what had happened and taking the potion, he simply fed it to them in their sleep.

"We will wait and watch and see what happens when they wake up." He told Neville and his grandmother softly. Both of them were horrified at the inferi like creatures and at the dark spells on the protection wards. The Lestranges were equally horrified, though they hid it better.

Bellatrix asked the same question Harry had asked before, "What did they know Flammel? What had they found out?"

"That is the question is it not? Harry asked me the same thing a little while before and I am afraid we will not know till they wake up. It must be something big for them to be placed like this for this long." Nicholas said smiling sadly.

He asked the Lestrangle to leave and they left after Bellatrix told Nicholas how to give the rest of the potion to them. "Give one dose everyday, for the next three days and on the last day you will know the full extent of their recovery. Their recovery should start from tomorrow and the process will finish when the dosage is completely taken."

"Thank you," two voices said at the same time as they prepared to apparate back. Neville and Mrs. Longbottom were standing stiffly looking straight at the Lestranges. The Lestranges were equally uncomfortable as they nodded their heads in acknowledgement and disappeared.

Snape and the others came in after sometime to wait along with Harry. All of them spent the time talking about the encounter at St. Mungo's, when Harry suddenly exclaimed, "Sir, if the Longbottoms had been under this kind of protection, then Albus would tear the place apart to see who had taken them and where. From St. Mungo's he would come straight here with aurors and probably even the Minister to presumably inform Neville and his grandmother about the kidnapping, but actually to see if they were brought here. I think we should not keep them here and we should take them to Potter castle where no one will come and no one will suspect."

Harry panted for breath as he finished all this in one breath. Nicholas stood up and hugged him. "Brilliant Harry! That is definitely what Albus would do. In fact even though Albus is now incapacitated, the Ministry would still come here on its own to check.

"We must take them elsewhere. Are you willing to allow us to take them to Potter castle. Remember you cannot come as you have to pretend to know nothing and be horrified and demand action. Neville I am going to ask for another oath to protect you so that Albus will not see this in your mind. Augusta I am assuming your Occlumency is fine."

"Yes, my Occlumency is fine and if Harry does not mind of course you may take them with you. We will stay here. Their safety is paramount and having waited this long we can wait till the hue and cry about their absence has died down." She said as Neville nodded his head, his eyes alight with hope on his parents' sleeping faces.

Nicholas did not waste another moment. He took the oath from Neville and left with Frank, while McGonagall took care of Alice. Neville walked to Harry and hugged him hard. "Thank you so much, how much you will never know." He whispered. Harry hugged the boy who had stood up to side with him after only just knowing him and

saying his good byes left with the others as he had to key in Frank and Alice into the castle.

Perenelle stayed back to once again remove traces of their magical signature and presence and left the remaining Longbottoms to sleep with hope in their hearts for the first time in almost fifteen years.

End of Chapter – 17

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## Chapter – 18

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Harry apparated back to the castle where Nicholas and McGonagall were waiting for him along with Perenelle, Snape, Sirius and Remus. Harry keyed in the sleeping Longbottoms and all of them apparated into the house and Celly and the other elves prepared a comfortable room for the Longbottoms.

They were carefully levitated on to the huge bed and all the others sat by the bed to keep watch over them. Nicholas wrote to Bellatrix telling her about shifting the Longbottoms and told her to be careful. He received a short acknowledgement in return.

Harry in the meanwhile had sent a note with Lily to Neville saying his parents' were fine and sleeping peacefully and were safe inside the castle. He had made the note self inflammatory and no sooner than Neville read it than it burned into flames. He too, received a short thank you note from Neville and his grandmother.

The question that was burning into everyone's head was why had the Longbottoms been put into such a torturous existence for what would have been the rest of their lives. What had they found that was so incriminating or so harmful to Albus that he had ordered such a harsh sentence.

All of them dozed off where they were sitting for about two hours when Harry was awakened by a soft sound. "Frank? Neville?" said a voice very softly and very hoarsely, unused to speech or any vocal activity for the last fifteen years.

He slowly got up so that he would not scare her and went to her, "Mrs. Longbottom, how are you feeling?"

She shrank back terrified and looked at him with her big brown eyes so like Neville. She kept looking for about five minutes before she frowned as if trying to recall something and looking up at him she asked softly, "James?" Harry nodded his head, not wanting to explain there was a fifteen year gap in her life just when she had opened her eyes.

He walked around the bed to her side, changing his eye color to brown and bending down he asked her, "How are you Alice?"

That was the right thing to ask as she relaxed, "Why did you call me Mrs. Longbottom if you are really James?"

"You were hurt Alice and I wanted to see if you remembered." He explained, his heart pounding in excitement and hope that they would be all right and be a family with Neville.

She smiled and by now all of them had woken up and at Nicholas's signal all of them had moved to stand back, so that they would not confuse Alice and Harry could work on her without putting her into a panic.

Then she looked around and saw Frank sleeping, "Where are we? Merlin! James, Neville? My baby how is he?" she cried softly, the terror showing in her face and voice again.

"He is absolutely fine Alice. He is with Frank's mother." For the life of him, Harry could not call the formidable lady by name.

Alice relaxed once again. Then, "How are Lily and Harry? Oh! James, I have something very important to tell you, Lily, Sirius and Remus. Where are all of them?"

Harry suddenly felt choked from inside hearing the names of his parents and could not play this game longer. He bent down, changing his eyes and sat down beside her. "Mrs. Longbottom, I am not James." At her terrified cry, "You have been sick for the last fifteen years, Mrs. Longbottom, and I am Harry Potter, the son of James and Lily.

"Neville is fifteen years now and he is at your house with the elder Mrs. Longbottom. Both of them are fine. You are at Potter castle because we are scared someone might harm you. Now please take rest and we will talk later."

Alice looked at him and kept staring at him and Harry looked back at her steadily, smiling gently all the while. After almost ten minutes, she gave a small very sad smile as two lonely tears fell down her cheeks

and held out her hand, "Come here Harry. James and Lily are dead aren't they child? Tell me the truth is Neville alive or has Albus killed him too?"

Harry gasped in shock at her words as she continued. "You are keeping Frank and I here, safe from Albus is it not?" at Harry's bemused nod, the tears flowed more freely as she asked in a choked voice, "Neville?"

"Oh Mrs. Longbottom, I swear on my mother he is all right as is the elder Mrs. Longbottom. They are in their home to avert suspicion your disappearance would cause and the moment the chaos would die down both of them will come here. Neville is so eager to see you like this. All this while he has been visiting you in St. Mungo's, where you could not even recognize him. I swear he is fine Mrs. Longbottom. I swear, please believe me." Harry said desperately, wanting her to believe him.

She looked at him and wiped her eyes and patted his arm. "Child, I believe you. Thank you." She said simply and closed her eyes and went to sleep just like that.

Harry looked at the others as they came out from where they had hidden and all of them went to the side of the room and plopped down on the chairs there. Harry, Snape, Sirius and Remus sat on the ground, leaning against the chairs and all of them looked at each other.

"So she knows Albus would kill your parents Harry." Started Nicholas softly, not wanting the couple asleep on the bed a short distance away to hear them.

"When were they tortured and why did Albus send Bellatrix? If Alice Longbottom knew Albus was evil, she could have warned the death eaters and turned them against him. But did she know Albus was Voldemort or did she know something else altogether?" Snape frowned as he tried to make sense of it all.

"Snape, the Longbottoms were tortured on the same night as when Lily and James were killed. On Halloween. If Alice and Frank knew something, they had to know it before that. If they did find something

that made Alice so sure after fifteen years of being insane that Lily and James would be killed by Albus, then why did she not say anything to Lily or James? They could have been saved. And why did they not go to the other members or at the very least go into hiding?" Sirius was anguished thinking furiously about the painful events that had happened so long ago, that had caused so much grief to all of them.

No one unfortunately had any answers and all of them were very frustrated as they looked at the couple who were sleeping so peacefully.

All of them dozed off again and this time no one woke them up and three hours later all of them woke up fresh to tackle the events of the day, that was to go into the chamber and remove the books and tackle the 'pet' basilisk.

As they went down to the dining room to have a heavy meal a combination of breakfast and lunch, Snape looked at the Daily Prophet that had the headlines "**Longbottom Couple is Missing**" and read out the story below to the others. It was a story of their being tortured to insanity and now being kidnapped. The Daily Prophet had many wild theories running about the disappearance and each was more ridiculous than the other.

*'The Longbottoms were famous aurors who were tortured to insanity by the followers of You-Know-Who. After being in St. Mungo's for almost fifteen years without any incident or happening, they were reported missing from their beds when a healer had gone on her routine rounds early in the morning.'*

*'She immediately notified the aurors and wide search has been launched to find a couple who have been mentally insane for the last fifteen years. How did they vanish and who took them away and why are some of the burning questions that assail the Ministry and the aurors. The staff at the hospital are equally bewildered as they can think of no reason why two helpless persons be kidnapped.'*

*'Mrs. Longbottom who was looking extremely distraught and furious at the same time, has sharply criticized the Ministry and the hospital, which she says is not capable of even keeping two helpless people'*

*safe. Her grandson Neville was not available for comment as he was reportedly in a state of shock.’ “I think it is the death eaters on the orders of Voldemort who has done this dastardly deed. Do they have no shame and they have stooped down to new levels to kidnap helpless and mentally unsound persons who cannot even recognize themselves let alone others.” The story finished with sympathizing with the regal matriarch of the Longbottom family and hoped her son and daughter in law would return safely.*

All of them smiled at that and Nicholas wrote another note to Bellatrix to be cautious and finishing their meal all of them trooped upstairs to get ready to leave for Hogwarts. Nicholas had told the elves to call him at once if either of the Longbottoms woke up and soon they were ready to tackle the chamber and the beast inside.

Nicholas gave another dose of the potion to the sleeping couple and wrote Neville and Mrs. Longbottom telling them that Frank and Alice were fine and also told them Alice had woken up briefly, she had sounded all right and then had gone back to sleep once again.

Though Albus was sick and incapacitated they still proceeded cautiously and silently. Though Arthur and the rat were not at the castle at present, it was nevertheless better not to take chances.

Harry, Snape, Sirius, Remus, Nicholas, Perenelle and McGonagall went to Hogwarts, flooing to Nicholas's rooms. McGonagall went to her rooms to keep a check on the castle and alert Perenelle if she detected anything suspicious. The others cast invisibility charms and masked their scent and smell and also added silencing and notice-me-not charms all over them.

Then they went to the unused girl's bathroom on the second floor and slowly pushed the door open. There was no one there, but after what happened in St. Mungo's Nicholas or any of the others were not willing to take chances. They first placed massive silencing charms and silencing wards on the door of the bath room and then on the entire bathroom as well.

All of them completely checked the area for any type of magical wards and to no one's surprise they found extensive wards on the sink. With all of them working together, they removed the wards on

the sink quickly and went right to the back and conjured huge blocks of stone. They placed the stone in front of them and cast protective shields between the stone and them selves.

Then Harry alone walked near the sink and hissed, "*Open*" to the snake carved in one of the taps on the sink and then he ran back to join the others behind wards that they had prepared. They watched as the whole thing moved apart and a fraction later ten killing curses flew out and crashed against the stone and all the debris flew towards them hitting the wards.

Harry conjured huge balls of flame and threw them in, with Nicholas doing the same. Five minutes and huge explosions later that would have brought the entire School in a second if it weren't for the silencing charms and wards that thankfully held, there was total silence and there was no sink.

There was a huge crater and Harry, Nicholas and Perenelle simultaneously sent their magic into the crater and then all of them jumped into the crater and immediately sent out their magic, while conjuring huge blocks of stone to repel the killing curse, if there were more of those dead creatures.

Then Sirius and Remus along with Perenelle went up again, levitating themselves to stand guard in the bathroom itself to deal with anyone who came along. The other three Harry, Nicholas and Snape went inside cautiously. But as they progressed there were no more of those dead creatures and soon they approached the main door of the chamber.

Snape conjured three big roosters and reinforced the silencing spell on all of them and waited. All of them with their hearts pounding, walked up to the door and Harry hissed once again. This time, though he did not just ask the door to open.

*"Open the door for the direct descendent of Salazar Slytherin."* Harry hissed at the door.

The door did not open immediately. Instead it sent out a spiral of magic towards Harry that was very hot and would have burned him to a crisp if he had not been the descendent of Salazar Slytherin.

The other two stepped far back and suddenly they were cut off by the same hot magic that buzzed angrily and warningly as they tried to move past it. They stepped back hurriedly in dismay and Nicholas sent word to Perenelle telling her what had happened and asking her for ideas.

Snape was horrified as he was cut off from Harry and more terrified when he could not access him mentally a second later. He went into a panic state crying incoherently to Nicholas, who was also horrified as he tried to calm Snape. For once Nicholas had no answers and he could not break the magic that was thrice the strength of the wards of the Potter castle.

Perenelle had nothing to offer except more panic and it took all her strength to stop Sirius and Remus hurling down to Harry. She finally accomplished that by freezing them and speaking sternly to them.

"We have to stay here all the more now. What if Albus or the rat makes an appearance? We have to make sure they do not have to deal with all this as well. Now get your selves up and about and try and think of something that will help."

"Blink once if you agree and I will release you. Else it will be only me against anyone who comes in." she looked at them sternly, waiting for their answer. Reluctantly they blinked once and were furious when she set them free.

"What is the use of staying here if Harry is in danger there? We should be there helping him." Sirius was trying not to cry as he thought of the last link with a man he thought of as his brother and a boy as his son, was now in the clutches of Merlin knows what.

Perenelle's expression softened as she looked at both of them. She knew what they were going through as she looked at their miserable faces, but it was all the more imperative that they be more alert and make sure that no one would intrude from their end and spoil the party.

She said so to them emphasizing the importance of keeping a strict vigil at this time. "We have to be careful, you know. We have to make sure that the three down are not bothered by any hassles from above.

They already have a huge problem to take care of with the basilisk and now Harry seems to be cut off from Snape as well. What is to say that Albus might come down suddenly, even if he is rather terribly ill at this point? Please let us not lower our guard and let us be on maximum alert.”

Both Sirius and Remus were not impressed by Perenelle’s speech as she seemed to be speaking to convince herself as much as them. Well by looking at her face you could see she was not convinced at the little speech she had given them as there were still traces of panic and extreme worry running through it as she was speaking with Nicholas all the time and the worry increasing in her face as he could not reassure her, and they were not convinced either as both of them knew the danger Harry was in and were biting their lips and the inside of their cheeks trying not to give in to the horror and panic that was ripping through them.

Meanwhile Harry was standing in a swirl of magic that was unbearably hot for a few minutes before it became warm and highly comforting. He looked back but could not see Nicholas or Snape and when he tried to access Snape through the mind link he found a blank. Harry panicked only for a second, before his attention was turned away from the link.

The swirl of Magic was now penetrating his mind and as much as he tried to block it, it was of no use at all as the magic seemed to enter his mind easily and seemed to have no trouble probing in depth. Harry was horrified as he thought of the damage that could be done if this magic belonged to Albus and the knowledge he would have because of this probe. All that he had done the other day to make sure Albus would never peep into his mind was now useless.

Suddenly the magic withdrew from his mind and as Harry tried to turn and reach Snape, he found the magic was still blocking him both physically and mentally. Harry was by now desperate and he had no clue how to proceed and what to do to get out of this mess he had created by announcing to the door he was a Slytherin.

At that time he had thought it to be a brilliant plan as by announcing at the door he was a Slytherin would make the chamber welcome him



and would negate the wards of intent that Voldemort had created by making sure that no one except him could enter the chamber. As a Slytherin Harry had thought the magic would have to grant him permission to enter the chamber without harm.

As Harry was ruining his fate and cursing himself, the magic suddenly parted and the door slowly opened. Harry panicked even more. He did not know what to do now as there was a fully grown basilisk inside the chamber and he was alone with no one to help him.

He quickly conjured a huge rooster and holding it in front of him, he slowly entered the chamber, the rooster crowing for all its magical worth. Harry slowly stepped in and then held his breath. The chamber was huge and beautiful. There were columns and columns of pillars in pristine white marble, with elaborate carvings. There were many doors off the main chamber room that Harry had entered into.

Harry looked around him in amazement at the splendor that surrounded him. He walked straight down the path looking all around him in wonder at the beauty that was there so many feet below the ground and was in probably the same condition as when it was built in the first place.

As he was walking looking all around him, he reached the other end of the huge hall, where there was a magnificent portrait of Hogwarts, with her sprawling grounds, the Forbidden Forest, Quidditch pitch, the lake and the sprawling gardens. The Portrait was beautiful and it occupied the whole side and as Harry stared at it in awe, four figures emerged from the main doors of the castle and looked at him eagerly.

They were the Founders' of course and Harry gaped as they greeted, "Child, which year is this and who are you? You are the child of one of us; otherwise you would not have been able to see the portrait and all of us. Tell us, please; for it is many, many hundreds of years since an heir with such good intentions and mind have come down to the chamber and have the magic we put into place reveal us to you."

Harry almost fainted with amazement as he looked at the speaker, a beautiful woman, with long black hair that was straight and long, up to her waist. She had stormy grey eyes that were intelligent and a sharp

nose. Her lips were perfect and Harry just stood there, his mouth wide open and his eyes round with amazement.

The lady saw his gob smacked expression and she laughed gently, along with the others. Harry, coming to his senses, blushed profusely, "I am sorry Madame. I am Harry. Harry James Potter and I am the heir of both Slytherin and Gryffindor. Robert Potter was my ancestor, whom I was told was adopted by one of the Founders' of Hogwarts, Salazar Slytherin."

The handsome man with hair that was as Black as the lady who had spoken to Harry beamed at him. He had clear blue eyes and an intelligent face and shrewd discerning eyes. "I am Salazar, Harry. We may call you that may we not?" at Harry's nod, he continued, "We had created this chamber as our own special room with many enchantments and protections. Only the heirs can access this room and bring others with them."

Gryffindor continued, "The last person I am afraid was not a very good one as his magic was very negative and wrong. His name was Riddle and this chamber had to open for him as he was Salazar's heir through his estranged wife. We did not reveal ourselves to him, though we watched him very carefully. Unfortunately he could access all the rooms and the information they contained."

"Did he take away the books Sir?" Harry asked feeling panicked once more.

"No Harry. He did not. No one can take them away. Now let me introduce ourselves to you. I am Godric and this handsome bloke on my right is Salazar. The beautiful lady on my left with the black hair is Rowena and the stunner with blonde hair and blue eyes to Verna's right is Helga."

All of them greeted Harry enthusiastically. Harry felt overwhelmed as he greeted them shyly.

"Now that all of us know each other, tell us about yourself grandchild many times of my beloved son Robert." Salazar said with his eyes bright as he looked at the boy who was the grandchild, though many times over of the boy he had considered his true son, Robert.

So Harry spoke to them starting with what he knew of the current events and then his own story, Albus, Voldemort, the Flammels, his mother's plans, the deaths of his grand parents and parents, the de aging of Snape, Sirius and Remus and his rescue from the Dursleys and finished with the Longbottom's rescue and the dead attackers and their reasons for the trip into the chamber.

The founders' were horrified that someone so evil was in charge of their beloved School and were very sad to hear about the rivalry that bordered on hate and scorn between Griffindor and Slytherin and were extremely taken aback about the condition of the Wizarding World.

With Voldemort, while they had known he was evil, they had thought he would be taken care of by the others who would not let him succeed in his plans to control the Wizarding World. But to hear that the Headmaster of Hogwarts and a beacon of the Light was so dark and evil, that he even made Voldemort look like a petulant child was horrifying to the Founders' who decided to do their bit to help Harry and the others to cleanse their beloved School of its current Headmaster.

"So you see I have come here to attack the basilisk that is why the rooster was with me. But I got to meet with all of you. I am honored, really." Harry smiled at them as he banished the rooster.

"Harry, Sarina is still alive and she is right here." Salazar told him. Harry squawked in fear as he conjured the rooster again.

"Sarina, is that the basilisk's name?" at Salazar's nod, Harry looked around frantically prodding the rooster to keep crowing.

"Harry, don't get scared." Salazar told him with a smile. "Sarina will not attack you or anyone you vouch for, even if they look into her eyes. She was my first gift to Robert after his blood bond with me. He left her here to protect the School and help the heirs in case of any trouble. Voldemort had possessed her and ordered her to kill anyone who stepped into the chamber, but now Voldemort is dead. The moment he was killed his order expired. Now bind her to you and she will become your as she should be because you are Robert's heir."

Harry blinked as he struggled to understand what Salazar was saying. Bind a basilisk to him. Make it his familiar! Merlin! What was happening here?

The Founders' urged Harry to do as Salazar said. "Harry this will protect not only you, but also the School and help you with Albus." Godric was insistent.

The moment Harry agreed, Salazar told him to call Sarina and look straight into her eyes. Harry gulped and questioned to himself the wisdom of what these people, a thousand years old were suggesting.

Nevertheless, he complied and putting his wand back into his holster, another unwise move in his opinion, he hissed softly, praying to anyone and every one of the Gods and Goddess, banishing the rooster very reluctantly.

*"Sarina, I am the direct descendent of Salazar Slytherin and his blood bonded son Robert Potter. My name is Harry Potter and I wish to bind you and make you my familiar just as your master Robert Potter did. Come, Sarina, come to me."*

Salazar looked immensely proud as he heard Harry speak in parcel tongue. But Harry was not looking at him. He was sweating profusely, panicking and trying his best not to reach for his wand and conjure a hundred roosters all at once.

The portion of the wall to the right of the Founders' portraits slowly slid open as Harry had his heart in his mouth. There was a soft hiss as a huge basilisk came out gracefully, her yellow eyes looking straight at Harry. She went straight to him and slowly coiled him. Harry screamed. He just could not help it. He was so scared.

Suddenly Sarina lowered her head and bit him on his shoulder. Harry went rigid with shock and closed his eyes. The world went black. He had died, he knew it and he had failed to make good the promise he had made on his mother's memory were the only thoughts that were running through him. She had done all that she had only to be in vain. He had foolishly listened to the stupid Founders' and went and got himself killed.

All his studies, the sacrifices of Snape, Sirius and Remus were in vain. He had died. *"Master?"* a voice sounded in his head. *"Do not be scared. No harm will come to you because of me. I will protect you and also not harm any one who is yours."*

Harry was confused for a moment as the voice in his head was new and, he in his state of total panic had really thought he had died, he had no coherent thinking. So for a moment he thought the basilisk was following him to the after world as well. He screamed.

"Go away, you monster. You killed me and now I have failed my mother. And now you have come to the other world as well. The bloody Founders' ought to be shot. Just wait. They are here as well and I am going to put them through all the darkest and blackest curses I can find."

Harry stopped there as he heard a lot of laughter coming towards him as well as amusement shimmering in his head. Furiously, he opened his eyes and removed his wand, to hex the laughing asses to oblivion. He stopped, more confused as he found himself in the chamber and Sarina looking at him with laughter in her eyes? Did basilisks laugh? Maybe they did after they killed their victims. But how did she follow him here? Here?

He blinked once more and looked around and saw the Founders' laughing their heads off. He scowled as they stopped laughing. "Oh Harry! You are not dead. Sarina bit you to bind herself with you. Do you hear her in your head? She belongs to you now."

Slowly Harry understood and then he blushed, still a bit angry with himself and the Founders'. They calmed him down and Harry awkwardly patted Sarina on her head that was level with him. She hissed in pleasure and coiled down by his side.

"Sir, I must tell Severus and Mr. Flammel that I am all right and would all of you be willing to help us to find an antidote to the marks to remove at least the bondage spell from them," and as another idea struck him, "I also told you about the Longbottoms, could you help us to find a cure to the curse that affected them and kept them in a state of mental insanity for almost fifteen years."

“Of course, my child. Call all of them inside and all of us will meet them and reassure them and work together.” Salazar told him with a smile.

Harry patted Sarina once more and then ran from the room. He came to the door and opened it and shut it behind him. The magic was still swirling outside the door keeping Snape and Nicholas away from it. Harry walked through it and went towards Snape, who fell on him as did Nicholas.

“Where the hell have you been you bloody fool?” Snape was crying as he hugged Harry. Nicholas, too was hugging Harry, “What did you hiss to the damn door and what happened?” asked Snape, still holding on to Harry like a leech.

He had been terrified and had been fighting Nicholas to enter the magical sphere and it had taken all of Nicholas’s power to stop an almost demented Snape.

Harry hugged Snape and patted him as he asked Nicholas to call the others down. Sirius and Remus fell on Harry as Snape had and then after Perenelle checked him thoroughly and pronounced him fit, Harry told them everything. All of them listened with expressions of awe and delight on their faces.

Harry then told them to stay calm and walking through the magical swirl that was still there, hissed softly for Sarina. All of them watched as the magnificent basilisk came up to them, the hot magic not affecting her. Snape, Sirius and Remus were trembling with fear, while the Flammels were standing straight with no trace of fear on their faces. They had their own pet basilisks after all.

Sarina looked at all of them, hissing softly as she registered their magical signature and their smell. Then she went to Harry and hissed softly at him telling him she was finished. Nicholas led all of them upstairs so that Harry could leave Sarina there on guard while all of them went down to meet with the Founders’.

Harry then called Lily and told her to bring McGonagall. He asked Sarina not to harm her as she was standing petrified in terror by seeing the huge basilisk, not knowing anything of what had happened

there. Nicholas filled her in briefly as Sarina was flicking her tongue in a very frightening way and poor McGonagall registered only bits and pieces of what had happened.

Then on Nicholas's advice, Harry asked Sarina to stay there petrifying anyone who came inside and created new wards to repel roosters.

All of them went in to the huge hole where the sink had been, and Harry led them inside. The magic was still swirling and Harry left the others and went inside to ask the Founders' to subdue the magic and allow the others inside.

After asking them Harry came out and accepted the magic as the Founders' had told him to and after the magic had gone into him completely, he opened the door and let them all inside.

All of them were filled with awe at the magnificent chamber and were thrilled to meet the Founders' and soon were chatting away like old friends.

"The curse you say is something for which there is no full cure. This Bellatrix person is right when she says that the potion she gave you is the only one. But we can definitely help you with the Dark Mark and Salazar can tell you offhand how to not only remove the bondage spell from the mark, but also the entire mark itself." Godric said smiling at all of them even as Salazar nodded his head.

"Why is there so much hatred between Gryffindor and Slytherin if the two of you are such good friends and in fact family by marriage?" Sirius was curious as were the others.

"Well, we are friends who birthed this great School together. We have always remained friends and after Robert married Marisa we became family as well." Salazar said sweeping his hand towards the School that was behind him and the others. "But with my wife with whom I was estranged, I had three children, two daughters who were very lovely and kind and welcomed Robert as their own and a son who sided with his mother in his hatred of me, my principles and Robert.

“Their complaint was the School itself as they felt my talents were wasted by being merely one of the four Founders' instead of doing far greater things with the power I had. Robert was another thorn as my wife could not accept I had become so fond of an orphan boy that I was willing to adopt him as my own. It is not from the son but from my first daughter that Voldemort is descended, though.” Salazar finished in a sad tone as he thought of the name his House had managed to gather in the last two hundred years.

Then Salazar taught Harry the spell to undo the bondage spell on the Dark Mark and also the spell to remove the mark fully from them. “This spell is a combination of parcel and ancient magic that is chanted in parcel tongue Harry. This spell will work on any mark that qualifies as a dark mark.” Salazar told him once he was satisfied with Harry’s pronunciation of the spell.

“What qualifies as a Dark Mark?” came four voices together as Snape, Sirius, Remus and McGonagall asked simultaneously.

“Anything that is used to bind one person to another as a subordinate or slave or servant so that the person who takes the mark comes under the control of the person who has cast the mark.” Salazar said smiling at the question that came from the four of them.

“You must leave,” Helga said softly, she and Rowena had been rather silent participating only when they were addressed directly; otherwise they had been content to sit down on the lawn and watch everyone. “You will be late otherwise and you must also be close to the Longbottom couple and be there to attend to them when they wake up.”

All of them acknowledged the truth of her statement and they left after Salazar made Harry recite and practice the spell one more time. the Founders' asked them to come back when ever they could and told them that all the books that were here could also be found at Potter castle as the books there came from the time of the Founders' till the present day.

“Any books you do not find or if you want any assistance from the four of us, you only have to come here and we will do our best.” Godric smiled as he and the others waved them off.



All of them went to the abandoned bathroom and began the process of rebuilding the bathroom to the way it was. Before that however, Harry asked Sarina to go back to the chamber and remain there. *"Wait for me there till the mess with Albus who has killed my parents is taken care of. Then I will take you with me to Potter castle if you so wish or you may remain here if you like okay?"* he hissed as he patted her head and slowly stroked her.

*"Yes, Master, I will do as you say."* She hissed back and so Harry went to open the chamber once again and left her there and came back to find the others had already started rebuilding. He joined them and soon there was no trace of the fact that a huge crater had been rebuilt.

All of them then said their good byes to McGonagall and left as silently as they had come. They had only added basic wards, as Harry had ordered the chamber itself to imprison anyone who would dare enter it. The magic would not allow any one to escape.

*"That will be enough Harry. Remember Albus was able to gain entry into the passage, but he was not able to go into the chamber like Voldemort as he is not an heir. That is why Sarina was free and the dead attackers were in the passage rather than in the chamber itself. Even if he finds a way around it the chamber will imprison him and Sarina will petrify him and the wards that you carry now of the chamber will alert you."* Nicholas told Harry as they went back with a huge sigh of relief.

All of them went to the castle where the elves told them that the Longbottoms had been sleeping peacefully all this while. Harry and the others exhausted ate their way sleepily through dinner and went to sleep as well, though Harry, and Snape, who refused to leave his side and struck to him like a leech slept in a bed the elves had conjured for them in the same room as the Longbottoms.

Nicholas had felt that Harry should tackle them as Alice had reacted favorably to him and as Snape refused to leave him, both of them were assigned to the Longbottoms. Harry cast a monitoring spell that would wake him up if either of them woke up and fell into a deep sleep of the deserved.

End of Chapter – 18

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## Chapter – 19

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Harry had been asleep for about four hours when his monitoring spell woke him up. He got up, not wanting to disturb Snape who was sleeping soundly and softly went to the other bed. Snape had been sticking to Harry like a leech and even the mental link that had been reinforced after they got out of the chamber had not reassured him.

It was Alice who was awake again and was looking around with a scared look on her face. Seeing Harry she calmed down and sent a small smile to him and asked softly, "Neville is fine isn't he, Harry?" and looked at him trying to see deep into him.

Harry nodded his head vigorously as he once again sat down by her side and took her thin hand into both his hands. "Yes, Mrs. Longbottom. He is fine. But for now it is better he is at your home as the Ministry officials and others will be in and out, wanting to speak with him and Mrs. Longbottom. The moment it settles down both of them will come here to be with you and Mr. Longbottom."

She lay quietly for sometime looking at Harry and at her hand in his alternatively. Harry had been holding her and she had not resisted so Harry had continued to hold her hand, softly and gently stroking her hand. Harry desperately wanted to ask her questions but was scared to panic her and so he remained quiet as he ran through all ideas for gently questioning her.

"You look a lot like James, and you have the same brilliant green of Lily's eyes, Harry." Alice said suddenly breaking through Harry's thoughts of how to initiate a conversation that would not scare her. When she spoke, he decided to grasp at it.

"I know, everyone's told me that Mrs. Longbottom. I don't remember, though." Harry started, praying she would say something that would help them, give them a few answers.

She looked at him, her eyes wide and sad. "Yes you would not remember Harry. Your parents died the same day we were tortured by Albus." Slow tears fell from her eyes as she suddenly clasped his

right hand tightly. Harry sat petrified as he watched her cry, each tear falling with a depth of sorrow he could not quite define, but felt all the same.

Harry sat there frozen with shock as Alice poured out her grief. Slowly so that he would not alarm her, Harry shifted on the bed and came up to where she was lying down and placing an arm on her shoulder, lifted her so that she was partially lying and partially sitting against him. He held her as she wept and continued to hold her, trying to offer some comfort by holding her.

After about half an hour, when she had calmed down and Harry had thought she had gone back to sleep, she whispered again, "Harry, Frank and I were members of the Order of the Phoenix. Do you know of that organization?"

Harry did not move from his position as he answered her softly, "Yes Mrs. Longbottom. I do."

"Your parents were also members of that organization that was headed by none other than Albus. Frank and I were aurors and we had immense connections in various departments of the Ministry, both the high and the low levels."

Harry did not dare to answer. He held his breath as he tried not to hurry her to say more. He waited but Alice did not say anything else. Harry could have gnashed his teeth and banged his head with frustration. But the very fact that Alice Longbottom was so coherent made him happy on another level as he tried to squash a pang of envy as he thought of Neville.

He had Snape, Sirius and Remus who were family and the Flammels who had done so much for him. But a very small voice that would not listen, whispered back to him saying they were not his mother or his father.

Harry would have given the world to hold his mother as he was holding Mrs. Longbottom and anything, *anything* to hear the concern and love in his mother's voice as he did in Mrs. Longbottom's as she asked after Neville. Well Neville was lucky; Harry thought sadly, he would never know personally his mother's touch or his father's hug.

Alice Longbottom cleared her throat at that time diverting Harry of his own thoughts and he turned to her. "Are you feeling uncomfortable Mrs. Longbottom? Should I shift a bit or move a little or do you want to lie down fully?"

She shook her head. "No, this feels nice. Lily would have been proud of you Harry. She was my best friend at School. I was in Ravenclaw, though." She added her memories apparently all there.

"Thank you Mrs. Longbottom." Harry said not knowing how to respond.

She turned and smiled at him. Both of them were silent for some more time and then she started speaking again, "How is Frank? Has he woken up?"

"No Mrs. Longbottom. He is still in a healing sleep."

She sighed, "He took the brunt of the curses that Albus threw at Neville. He came off worse than I."

They were silent once again for a few minutes, then, "Most of the connections we cultivated were introduced to us by Augusta and William, you know William Potter your grandfather, who had immense connections and influences every where, to help us to find out about death eaters and Voldemort."

Harry sat silently as he tried to make sense of what she had said just then when it clicked. The Ministry level connections she had been talking about. "Oh!" he said inadequately.

"Your father was devastated to find one of his friends might be a death eater. When William died your Dad went to pieces knowing that his parents whom he had loved very fiercely were killed by one of his best friends for whom your father would have gladly died."

Harry could not answer for the life of him. He sat there holding her as she spoke about events that had happened a lifetime ago, but still had the power to hurt and to make him yearn, anguish, furious and sad all at once.

She was not expecting an answer from him, though. She continued, "When William died Frank and I made it our life's mission to find his killers. The list of people who could apparate into Potter castle was very short. Apart from James, Lily and his parents the list was Augusta, Albus, Sirius, Remus and Pettigrew and us.

"The times were very bad Harry and we did not exclude anyone from the list, not even your mother and Frank's mother, not the elves in the castle, no one. We slowly eliminated everyone except, Remus as he was a werewolf, Pettigrew and Albus."

"But Remus is innocent Mrs. Longbottom." Harry said protesting the fact that they could think Remus could be a killer.

She was silent for some time thinking about events of so long ago and then softly continued, "No, Remus was not a killer, but we accidentally found evidence about Peter that was damaging. We found him deep in Knockturn Alley with Avery, a day before Halloween, Avery whom we knew to be a death eater. Harry I am tired. May I go back to sleep?" she asked him and closed her eyes. Poor Harry, he could have screamed with frustration.

Instead all he did was slowly and gently lowered her on to the bed and made her comfortable and tucking her in, gazed at her now sleeping face. He looked at her for a long time thinking back on her conversation then turned and went back to his own bed to sleep.

He woke late in the morning, disoriented for sometime as he tried to make sense of the jumbled thoughts that ran through his mind, of basilisks, dead attackers, Founders' and Mrs. Longbottom. Mrs. Longbottom! Harry quickly got up and found Snape, Sirius and Remus staring at him in alarm as he suddenly gasped and sat up straight from sleep.

"Harry, are you okay?" asked Sirius with concern as he looked at Harry. Harry nodded his head and said hurriedly, "She woke up last night." He said nodding his head towards Mrs. Longbottom. "Let me get a pensieve and show it all to you, and the Flammels and McGonagall. Come on."

As he finished speaking, he ran to the bathroom and rushed out again in about ten minutes. Sirius and Remus had gone to tell the Flammels and also to call McGonagall, who had elected to stay in the castle the day before to see if anyone had noticed or heard anything out of the ordinary.

Harry stopped at the bed on his way out and looked down at the still sleeping Frank Longbottom and Alice Longbottom. Then he ran to the library with Snape running along with him.

All of them gathered in the library, where Nicholas had already placed a pensieve on a small table and had arranged chairs all around them. All of them viewed the memories Harry had placed within it and then looked at each other.

"Why didn't they say anything? If only they could have warned us or even James, everything would have been fine." Sirius sounded as frustrated as Harry felt.

"This was a day before Halloween. What if they were caught and were unable from that point to do or indeed say anything?" asked Snape as he looked at all of them.

Nicholas nodded sharply. "You are right Severus. That is what must have happened. Now till they or at least she gets up and tells us something more, I am afraid we have nothing to go on. We must be patient and wait. In the mean while I think we must tackle the death eaters' mark. Why don't we call them and remove the bondage mark and see if it works all right?"

"Yeah, Albus as Voldemort would be calling the others to come with their kids the day after tomorrow. But will he be all right by then?" asked Harry.

"He will be all right by the day after tomorrow. We have today and tomorrow left to do what we like. I suggest we ask the death eaters to come to the cottage and try removing the bonding spell and talk to them about what to do about the marking of the students." Nicholas said looking around at all of them enquiringly as he asked for their opinion.

All of them agreed and so Nicholas immediately sent word through the parchments and sent Lily to bring all of them to the cottage. In one hour all the death eaters as well as Harry and the others were there at the cottage which was once again in a time bubble.

All of them looked at each other awkwardly as they really did not know how to greet each other or make small talk as apart from destroying Albus there was nothing in common in between them at that point.

Nicholas cleared his throat as soon as they were settled but before they could talk, Bellatrix spoke, "Potter, how are they? Did they wake up at all?"

"Yes Mrs. Lestrangle, Mrs. Longbottom woke up twice and she was very coherent. She knew Albus had killed my parents' and it was because of Albus she was tortured by you, though she has not said that outright." Harry explained.

Bellatrix as well as Lucius and the others gasped and exclaimed loudly, as they understood what Harry had said. Nicholas cut through the exclamations by clapping his hands, and then told them briefly about the chamber, Mrs. Longbottom's conversations with Harry and to the others about what had happened when they had gone to St. Mungo's to rescue the Longbottom couple.

The death eaters were shocked even as Nicholas warned them to be careful as they were now in the process of recovering very real and crucial information about Albus.

"When Albus wakes up, there are two shocks for him. One is the missing Longbottom couple and the other is the chamber where the wards he placed are not only removed, but different wards, without any magical signature is found. He will be furious and it will be Voldemort who gives him the release in the form of some torture or other evil deeds. So please be careful and do not let your guard down on any issue however small it may be."

"What about the marking of our children? Are you saying we cannot avoid it at all?" Lucius was desperate as he asked Nicholas.



"Yes, Lucius, at this point it is better, they receive the mark. That way Voldemort will be pleased and there will be no suspicion on any of you about either the Longbottoms' or the chamber. Albus will be paranoid from this point onwards. The first time he was ill, Harry vanished. This time it is the Longbottoms." Nicholas told him firmly.

"In fact, Mrs. Lestrange, you and your husband in particular must be careful, as Albus will probably vent his anger on you for the Longbottom's. You must leave your memories of making the potion elsewhere or perhaps, give it to me, so that if Albus probes your mind even with Black magic, he will not find it." Harry told her, scaring her as she listened to him with growing apprehension.

"We now have the way to not only remove the bondage spell, but also the mark completely as the Founders' have taught it to Harry. So at the first available opportunity, all the children will have the bondage spells removed. Maybe just after the marking all of you can come here and Harry can take care of it." Nicholas said as Lucius and the others were looking panicked as they thought of their children being bonded to Albus, just as they were.

Soon all of them were discussing furiously the pros and cons of all that had happened in the last eight days or so, since they had met.

"The thing was to stop our children from being branded and from being a slave to the monster." Lucius Malfoy said furiously, very disappointed that Nicholas had suggested Draco and the others take the mark rather than fight it. He, along with the others had been hoping that Harry and the Flammels would somehow make their children escape the fate that had put them through such a torturous living.

"I understand perfectly and also understand your disappointment. But till we get a hold of Albus it would be wise to play along with him. Now I am going to ask Harry to remove the bondage spell from all of you and then we will take it from there. Please, let us wait till we have Albus within our grasp, it will be wise not to alert him to our knowledge of him." Nicholas pleaded with them.

They had to understand and see the bigger picture and allow for their sons and daughters to take the mark. If they did not agree there would be so many complications.

Fortunately for him, all of them agreed, though reluctantly. Harry then went first to Bellatrix and pointing his wand at her mark, slowly hissed out the incantation. "*Sagunitasssss bondimasss reversassssss*" and watched as the mark came up slowly as Salazar had indicated.

As Bellatrix looked on with amazement along with the others who were gaping at what was happening, Harry once again pointed his wand at the mark now lifted high from Bellatrix's arm by a few inches. There was a main stem from the centre of the mark that was Black in Colour that was the actual connection between the caster and the receiver and all around it were smaller strands that implied specific bonds.

"*Revealo bondimasss.*" Harry hissed and as a flash of deep blue light hit the strands, the thickest of the smaller strands glowed, a sickly pale white that was almost dirty to look at. Harry cast the severing charm at the end of the strand that was connected to the mark that was now hanging in the air and then using his wand slowly, lifted the strand out completely, giving it a sharp tug initially that brought a scream of pain from Bellatrix.

After the whole strand came out, Harry did not banish it, but completely burned it and conjuring a bowl, banished the ashes into it. He then hissed another incantation to close the mark and nodded his head at Bellatrix. She slowly flexed her arm and looked at the mark. It looked the same and she could not make out any difference in it.

She looked at Harry, "Thank you, now I will no longer be bonded for all my life to that thing. How will I know though?"

"I really don't know. We shall have to see the way you feel in his presence the day after tomorrow and after you leave this room you will know if you feel far lighter in your mind. That is what the Founders' told me. They said you will know." He finished as he started on Rudolphus Lestranger.

They spent the time discussing the Wizarding World and its various issues, especially about keeping its secret and also about dealing with half blooded creatures and their rights.

Harry finally finished on the last person and was totally exhausted and then, he burnt the conjured pot along with the ashes once more and then banished them to the sea. Then all of them prepared to leave.

“We can never thank you enough for what you have done today Potter. While now we do not have much to give, you may be rest assured that all of us and our families and our children are ever indebted to you and your family and we will always do our very best and serve you if you need us at any point, at any time, forever. You have given us hope and you have given us, above all, a will to live. Thank you for that, Harry James Potter.”

Bellatrix took out her wand and placed it across her chest as did everyone there as they nodded solemnly and endorsed what she had said.

Harry was mighty embarrassed as all of them thanked him in one voice and nodded his head awkwardly and flushing he said, “It is all right, you don’t have to promise me anything except what we have already spoken about. I did not do this for you to get out of one bond and into another, this time without a mark. I only did what the Founders’ taught me. All this is not my knowledge and I really cannot take credit for this.”

Bellatrix looked taken aback as Harry was actually refusing their oath that they had given by their wands and words. She felt humbled for the second time and she and the others became Harry’s people from that time onwards. They would work with him, listen to him, protect him, and fight for him and above all respect him, though they would never speak about it to him or anyone else.

She too, nodded her head awkwardly and all of them silently prepared to leave, eager to test their marks and enjoy the feeling of ‘lightness’ that the removal would give. They were very overwhelmed by the simple way Harry had conducted himself and had removed the horror without fuss or demands.

Harry and the others returned to Potter castle after all the death eaters had left. When they reached the castle, Harry had received his first message from Bellatrix in his parchment that Nicholas had given to all of them so that they could also be contacted in an emergency.

"It works. Thank you." Was all that was there and Harry somehow felt his spirits lift as he read those words and replied to the short note. All of them now had a choice and from now on their actions would be determined by themselves and no other. Harry also wrote a note to Turdin and informed him about the removal.

All of them had a huge dinner and went to the drawing room when Celly popped in and told Harry and the others that Mrs. Longbottom had woken up and was asking for Harry. Immediately Harry ran to their room and found Mrs. Longbottom silently crying. She looked up fearfully as the door opened and seeing him smiled tremulously and beckoned to him. Harry went to her and as usual sat next to her and taking her hand into his, held it lightly.

"How are you now Mrs. Longbottom?" he asked her softly, beginning to stroke her hand.

"When will Neville come here?" she asked him, her big eyes looking at him with hope? For what, maybe she thought he would be the one to bring Neville to her, Harry thought with a burst of sympathy for this woman who had suffered so much as replied.

"Soon Mrs. Longbottom, aurors are in and out of your home and if Neville or Mrs. Longbottom were to be absent now, it could make them suspects. Albus Dumbledore is incapacitated right now. He will most likely be all right tomorrow. Then the first thing he will do is to check up your home and Neville."

"But Harry, he could sift through Neville's mind and get the truth of what has happened." She cried softly and a bit hoarsely in distress, actually surprising Harry by her clarity of her thoughts.

"Not to worry, Mrs. Longbottom, Mr. Flammel has already taken an oath from Neville and he will be protected by the oath and Albus or anyone for that matter will not be able to glean a tiny bit from him or Mrs. Longbottom" Harry assured her hastily.

She slowly calmed down and kept looking at Harry as if wanting to see Neville inside his eyes.

Slowly Harry decided to ask her to continue the conversation from where she had left off. "Mrs. Longbottom, do you remember about Peter and the damaging evidence you found. Will you be able to talk about it?"

She sighed sadly as she continued to look at him, "You want to know about your parents killers, don't you Harry? Well in a few words, they are Albus, Peter and a man by name Arthur Weasley."

Harry gasped out aloud and so did the others who were hidden in the room, listening to her.

She smiled at him sadly. "You must promise me that you will not go after them alone, Harry. You cannot take them on your own. Wait till Frank and I are better and we will come with you and provide you with names of other people who will also come to our aid. Please."

Harry could not help it, his jaw had hit the floor and was scraping the floor to go through it, and he was so shocked. She was not even able to get up and here she was already planning to help him avenge his parents' deaths.

He never cried, had not cried even once when he was with the Dursleys, he had wept only once that he remembered and that was after seeing his mother's memory, and now for the second time in his young life Harry felt the tears come into his eyes and he failed in his struggle to contain them as they flowed down.

"Mrs. Longbottom, I well, I really don't know how to thank you, I mean you are not well," he was cut off by her, "Harry, William Potter was like a father to me. He was the one who stood as my father on my wedding day and gave me away. My father was a cousin of your grandfather and when my parents' died killed by Voldemort, your grandparents' stepped into that role. Your grandmother was a wonderful woman and Lily was my friend.

"You are today alone because of this man and his two associates. Frank and I are like this because of him. My Neville has lost fifteen

years of his life with his parents' because of him and we have lost the precious time that we should have been with our children because of them. Of course I want to fight child. I know you want to fight as well and so all of us will join hands and work it out."

She looked up fiercely at Harry and Harry looked at her with wonder as she lay down there helpless to even sit up on her own, but so determined to fight, fight a battle that had already given her enough scars and had made her lose fifteen years of her life. Harry leaned over and hugged her gently, thinking all the while about how lucky Neville was to have his mother back and wishing desperately he could hug his own mother like this at least once. But that could never happen as she was not here and he sighed and wiping his eyes got back to the matter on hand.

"I wish to sit up Harry. May I?"

Harry helped her to sit up and placing the fluffy pillows all around her, he made her comfortable and then decided to be frank with her.

"Mrs. Longbottom, could you tell me what is it you found about Albus that made him hunt you down like this and freeze you for fifteen years?"

"First promise me you will not go after him alone." She said looking straight at him. After he nodded his head, she asked him to come closer to her and hugged him gently.

"Before I say anything can you show me one thing?" she asked him, her voice trembling with hope, excitement and anxiety all at once. Harry was bewildered, "What Mrs. Longbottom?"

"William had a pensieve here in the castle; in fact he had more than one. Can you show me Neville? I wish to see him."

For an answer, Harry called Celly who popped in and Harry told her to bring a pensieve. He removed a few memories of Neville, the way he had stood up behind Harry to eat at the Slytherin table, the way he had asked Bellatrix and the way he had hugged Harry, thanking him for rescuing his parents'.

“They are incomplete memories, Mrs. Longbottom, except the first one and you will be able to recognize Neville in all of them your self. He looks just like you.”

She was trembling with excitement as Harry prodded the pensieve and made the memories play. Alice watched with wonder and with rivers of tears flowing down her cheeks as she saw her baby, her Neville stand up so straight and the way he had bellowed with anger at Molly Weasley and the way he had pleaded with Bellatrix and the way he had thanked Harry as Harry was leaving the Longbottom home with both of them.

Celly popped in at that time with a little food for Alice and Harry took it from her and slowly fed Alice himself. Her hands were trembling as was her whole body and she was staring sightlessly at where the memories had played out, tears pouring down her cheeks.

It was almost half an hour before she spoke. When she did she shocked Harry again. “I was pregnant at the time I was tortured by Bellatrix. The curse she used is a variation of the cruciatus. If the cruciatus is used, you lose your mind irreversibly, that is you become mentally insane. This curse is almost the same but with a chance of recovery if the antidote is given. The curse has to be cast till you fall down unconscious. That is when the curse starts working and you lose the ability to think, and be coherent.

“That was all Bellatrix did. Albus though went a step further. He had not only tortured us but also placed fear wards and wards that took us endlessly through the horror that happened to us. He connected it to the curse Bellatrix cast and he made it in such a manner that we would relive it at least once a day. That would affect us far more than anything else and make us go mad in a far more terrible way. That is what has happened to Frank and that is why he is taking so long to come out of it.

“I have recovered so quickly because the curse did not hit me alone. It hit my unborn child along with me, my baby who was about two months old in my stomach. At the time as the curse hit me, my stomach heaved and rendered me unconscious. I lost my baby,

aborted it, but retained my sanity, a sanity that my baby had given me, by sacrificing its life even before it had begun to form.

“So I had to relive the losing of my baby and fearing about Neville, but I was relatively sane as the curse did not hit me, penetrating me fully. As Albus’ wards were tied to the curse, they were also less intense than they should have been. When I fell down unconscious, Bellatrix took off the curse thinking she had been successful, not knowing that the curse had not hit me completely and I was far saner than I should have been.

“But the wards that Albus built around the beds, did not allow me to speak or even signal and he must have woven oblivate wards or must have had the nurse oblivate me every time Augusta or Neville visited, for I do not remember them at all.” She finished sadly, crying once more and slowly slipped off to sleep.

Harry got up slowly and went to the others who were concealed in the room and allowed Snape and Sirius to hug him, needing the comfort and the touch, wanting reassurance and love. Both of them did not disappoint and they hugged Harry fiercely pouring their love through their hugs into him.

Both of them and indeed all the others realized what an effort this young boy who had no experience of dealing with emotional issues like this, had put in interacting with Alice Longbottom and as she spoke on, the emotional nature of the conversation, would have had a great impact on Harry. It had had a huge impact on all of them and all of them had been horrified to hear about the child in the womb that had been killed so uncaringly. It made them shudder in horror.

Perenelle had tears flowing down her eyes as she listened to Alice. She had been blessed with so much, but she and Nicholas had been unable to have children and all their powers and all the magic of potions and charms at their disposal had been of no use. Now to hear about that small baby that had been killed and the fact that the foetus even before it had been formed into a baby had saved its mother’s sanity and life touched her on a level she had not thought possible.



Nicholas hugged his wife as he had an inkling of what was running through her mind and wanting to comfort her, held her tightly trying to ease her sorrow.

Harry lay back on Snape and Sirius and closed his eyes and went back to sleep feeling very sad and angry as he thought of all the lives that had been lost because of one man's folly. He hoped to undo that as quickly as possible and on that note he went into a very restless sleep.

All of them woke up the next morning and Nicholas told them that Albus would become all right by that evening. That put all of them who were already gloomy into a tense mood. There was no talking and they were all mostly silent as they went through their breakfast. That was when Celly popped up before Harry and told him that Alice was awake and she wanted to speak with Harry.

Harry ran upstairs and went into the room where Alice Longbottom lay. She was wide awake and relatively calm. She smiled at him as he entered and held out her hand for him to take and hold. Harry did so and sat by her side.

"You asked me yesterday about Peter and Albus and how we found out that Albus was the killer who murdered the Potters and did so much harm did you not?" at Harry's nod, she continued, "It is a long story and I will try and tell you as much as I can remember of it."

Harry held his breath as did the others who had cast invisibility charms and had entered the room and now were hiding behind the huge bed where she was lying down.

"I told you about finding Peter with Avery that day, didn't I? At that time both Frank and I were convinced that it was Peter who had murdered your grandparents and we were planning to go to Albus to tell him all about it and make sure that Peter would be removed from the Order and be arrested and sent to Azkaban.

"There was a meeting late at night on that day as the next day was Halloween and almost everyone would come to the meeting, except your parents as they were in hiding, because of the Prophecy.

“We went to The Leaky Cauldron, walking casually and prepared to flee from there when someone suddenly bumped into me and Frank and suddenly we were portkeyed into a huge stone castle that was very dark. In fact I know it was a stone castle only by the fact that we hit the stone floor and in the dim light the big, big room provided all of it looked like stone.

“We were astounded as we fell on the stone floor and as we got our bearings right and looked around in the dim light provided by the candles, when we saw Albus.” She shivered as she remembered the horror she had faced that day.

“We were never so glad to see him and immediately cried out our findings to him. He listened to us with a very concerned face and then signaled at a dark corner of the room and to our horror Peter and Arthur came smiling out of the shadows. I almost fainted with shock and Frank was equally astounded and both of us felt betrayed as we saw them smile so casually.

“That was when Albus very regretfully told us he could not let us go as he had an agenda for the morrow that could not be stopped. He sent Peter and Arthur away, when Peter’s mark started burning and told both of them to be careful. Frank was incensed and he shouted at Albus; that was a mistake that earned him a crucio that Albus held on him for almost three minutes.

“After the crucio Frank became quiet as he did not want Albus’s anger on me as I was pregnant at the time. He was also struggling to sit up after the particularly vicious cruciatus curse that Albus had thrown at him.

“I was watching all this and I just could not help asking him why he did all this when he had unparalleled fame, power and honor for the asking.

“He smiled and Harry, a cruel smile as that I still have to see. He told us casually as he was eating some fruit, that he was Heifer and he killed Grindelwald when he grew tired of that man and he had also captured Voldemort and killed him and assumed his name and had command of his death eaters.

“He was going to set an example of us by using a curse he said would be cast by a death eater and we would appear insane and we would relive the horror of what would happen the next day for the rest of our lives.

“He had been planning to kill us after the Potters as we had been meddling in affairs not ours and that we had sealed our death sentence when we decided to find out the murderers of the elder Potters, but now that we had been clever to find out about Peter, we would eventually find him out as well, so he would make an example of us, as Voldemort and not as Albus of course, he assured us.

“We were right there all through the night even when Albus went to the Order meeting and he came back all satisfied. The next day we were taken to our home after he made sure Augusta was otherwise occupied, though Neville was with the elves in his nursery.

“He bound us and our magic and took away our wands and brought down Neville. He kept hitting Neville, Neville,” she could not go on clutched Harry’s hand tightly and Harry could not say a word as he listened to the horror story.

After a few minutes she went on softly, “He kept hitting Neville with the cruciatus and Frank kept taking the curse for Neville by rolling in front of him as we were bound tightly. He had signaled me with his eyes not to move as I had to have the strength to take the curse the death eater would cast and still somehow try to keep the baby. That in the end was not necessary as I lost it.

“He tortured us in many ways and I cannot tell you child as they were very humiliating and,” she stopped tears flowing once again. This time Harry hugged her fiercely, tightly saying over and over again, “Don’t worry, Mrs. Longbottom you’ll see. It will be fine.”

“He smiled Harry, when we cried and laughed when he hit Neville. All through the day he was there and he killed our elves as well, by simply asking all of them to come down and stand in a straight line. He simply told them he would kill us otherwise. When they came, he just killed them all.

“In the night he received a signal after which he concealed himself and waited. Bellatrix came as if demented and cast the curse on Frank who was already so weak and then she hit me. When I regained consciousness, I was in St. Mungo's having lost my baby, with no recollection of Augusta's and Neville's visits and cursed to relive the horror of what happened in one short day for ever.”

Harry had not left her after he had hugged her and now he wandlessly placed a sleeping charm on her and left her to sleep. Shaking badly with sadness and an anger that was getting out of control, he asked Celly to bring rejuvenating potions and pepper up potions and looked up. Nicholas removed the invisibility charms on all of them as he nodded to Harry, who then fed it to her as she was sleeping. She looked better after she had the potions as she continued sleeping for the rest of the day.

All of them went to the library and sat down there totally depressed.

“How many more will suffer before Albus will pay for his sins?” asked Harry trembling, his voice shaking with suppressed emotions.

Sirius came up with the next question that alarmed all of them. “We must bring Neville and his grandmother here at once before Albus wakes up. If he wakes up and finds the Longbottoms gone, he will simply capture Neville and Augusta and wait for these two to go to them. And Alice with a first hand information about his humiliating methods of torture, would give her and Frank to Albus. That we should make sure should never happen.”

Nicholas looked at Sirius in shock. Then he sprang up and ran to his room, shouting to all of them to stay put there. “I will return in two hours after asking Augusta to give a statement to the press. Harry, please stay right here to keep them in all right?”

Harry nodded his head bemused as Nicholas ran to leave for the Longbottom home.

Perenelle meanwhile warned all the death eaters to be cautious as Alice had revealed very highly sensitive information that would mean instant death by torture.

All of waited for Neville and Augusta Longbottom to come to the castle for the time being.

It was after three hours that Nicholas came with Neville and the elder Mrs. Longbottom, and Harry went out and keyed them into the wards and an anxious Neville who was also looking thrilled and scared all at once came shakily towards Harry, his eyes full of anticipation and hope.

Harry hugged him and led them inside where a trembling Neville and a very hopeful Augusta Longbottom went up to see the other members of their family.

They stood by the bed Neville standing on his mother's side and Mrs. Longbottom on her son's side. Harry wandlessly removed the sleeping spell that woke Alice. She blinked her eyes and looked straight at Harry and smiled. "Did you put a sleeping spell on..." she stopped there as she saw someone standing to her side, a place where Harry usually sat and her eyes opened wide as she saw her son whom she had been asking for ever since she had woken up.

"Neville?" she gasped as her eyes opened wide in wonder at her son whom she was seeing after a gap of fifteen years. "Neville, Neville my baby," she whispered and opened her arms wide trying to sit up at the same time.

Harry began to rush to her side to help her, but stopped almost at once. He felt a bit bitter and a lot jealous as he saw Neville melting into his mother's arms, crying softly. He turned away, knowing that he was witnessing something very special and very personal between Alice and her son and he had no right to intrude and that love, the love and care of a parent was not for him, not in his life.

Snape, Sirius and Remus were all there and all three of them saw Harry and his reaction and all three pairs of eyes met together for a second and all three of them nodded once.

Harry immediately left the room mumbling his excuses vaguely to everyone and Snape, Sirius and Remus went out after them. Nicholas and Perenelle were in the drawing room and Harry followed

by the other three passed them to go out in to the garden to the woods that lay beyond within the boundaries of the castle.

Meanwhile Neville was being held by his mother and Alice was being fussed by Mrs. Longbottom who was wiping her eyes once every while.

Alice simply held Neville, slowly moving her hand over his face and touching him, stroking him and caressing him, perfectly content for the first time in the last so many years. There were no words exchanged, no exclamations and no questions from Alice or Neville who was looking into his mother's face in equal wonder as she stroked him softly.

They would talk later, but for now both were content at simply being with each other, one glad he was recognized after this long and the other feasting her eyes on the baby she though she had lost forever along with her unborn child.

End of Chapter - 19

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## Chapter – 20

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Harry ran down to the gardens and then ran through them, his eyes blinking furiously. He was angry with everyone and most of all with himself. Angry and ashamed that he could feel so jealous of the happiness that Alice and Neville were sharing after fifteen years of sheer torture and misery.

He went to the woods that lay beyond the gardens and was still within the wards and went to his favorite place, a small lake from which a tiny stream started and went underground just before the boundaries of the castle and threw himself on the ground and hit his fist on the ground in shame, anger, frustration and sheer longing, longing for a love like what he had just witnessed.

A second later three more bodies threw themselves on the ground alongside him and Harry looked up startled as he had been unaware of everything except his own misery. Snape and Sirius sat down on either side of Harry, and Snape fiercely hugged Harry to him, and a second later Sirius did just the same, with Remus holding on to his hands in front where he was sitting. Snape just held him, without speaking anything and Sirius and Remus were also uncharacteristically silent, waiting for Harry to say something.

"I feel so ashamed," Harry started in a low voice after almost half an hour, "ashamed of being jealous of Neville, when he has suffered so much till now. I have got all of you who have done so much for me, but when I saw that look on Mrs. Longbottom's face as she looked at Neville and the way both of them hugged each other..." Harry trailed off, "I wanted it for me, for my mother to do that for me. I feel so bad." His voice broke on the last word.

Snape and the other two looked at each other helplessly, their hearts aching at the longing that Harry had in his voice, the unconscious need he showed for wanting his parents' and their love. He knew they had loved him, but he needed physical touch and mental proof of that and that was something James and Lily could not give him; that was

not to be in this world for him and he had to accept it, otherwise he would not be at peace with himself, ever.

Snape wiped the tears Harry did not know he had shed, "There is no shame in feeling that you wish your mother were here, Harry and there is no harm in feeling that way when you saw Alice and Neville, as these feelings of want are kindled in you when you saw the completeness they had. And you don't have to feel ashamed for being jealous of Neville as well. These feelings are natural and will slowly fade with time."

Snape or the others honestly did not know how to comfort Harry as none of them had any experience in dealing with emotional issues of this nature. While all of them had faced rejection from their families and the society as a whole, and while all of them craved for acceptance from their families, they had not yearned as Harry did for the parents' he had never known. That was something they had never felt. They had been fighting for acceptance from their parents' not yearning just for their presence.

All of them were silent for some time giving Harry the space he needed and Harry too, slowly came to terms with himself, as he leaned on a fiercely protective Snape who was still clutching him as if to save him, and Harry at that moment needed the hugs he received from Snape and Sirius and the comfort from Remus who was still holding his hand.

The longing would not go away, but with time it would fade to an acceptable feeling of missing out on a special something rather than the massive ache that it was now. Time would bring other people who would give Harry other types of affection and love like Snape, Sirius and Remus had given him, and that would slowly suffice.

All of them sat there thinking on various things and it was typically Snape who went from this to another problem that had been festering in his mind since Alice Longbottom had spoken.

Snape, whose mind was continually processing the information Alice had given asked the others, "What was that place that Albus had taken them to? It did not sound like his home that Nicholas has told



us about. She did not say it was his house but that it was a stone castle of sorts.”

All of them frowned collectively as Snape uttered those words, their attention; especially Harry’s turned from the sad thoughts to the more pressing ones he had to deal with at present.

“Yeah, a big stone place and stuff, was what she said,” Harry also frowned at Snape and the other two, “and I vote we try and get in there somehow and try to see if we can find anything incriminating about Albus there. I am sure we will find something there and if we are really quick we can even leave a calling card.” He finished grinning shakily at them, who were mighty relieved to find their cheerful, well trying his best to be cheerful, Harry back.

The want was still there, they knew, but now he was already trying his best to heal. “How?” asked Sirius as he looked at Harry with anticipation? He had been most helpless with the guilt that tore through him as he watched Harry. If only James, Remus and he were more mature, Lily would have confided to them all her doubts and then things would have been so different not only for Harry but for all of them.

“Well,” Harry drawled smiling slightly, “We still have time to go to that place before Albus wakes up in the evening. We could capture Peter and go with him to that place and try to get something that will really incriminate him seriously.” Normally Snape would not have agreed so promptly without assessing the pros and cons, but he wanted Harry to take his mind of Alice and Neville. So he nodded his head reluctantly. “But on one condition, we must tell Nicholas and Perenelle as they may have a few ideas about how to get into the place.”

Remus was dispatched to fetch the old couple and soon all of them were sitting by the lake and discussing everything. Nicholas did not know of that place as Albus had never used Fawkes to go there. But they could try, by using Peter or Arthur as both of them knew about the place, Alice had seen both of them there.

Harry and Snape were deputed to go to The Burrow to tackle either Arthur or Peter. Harry wrote Bill Weasley in the parchment all of them

had been given as he was the safest to approach. He would not be at The Burrow, but at work at Gringotts, and Bill wrote back at once that Arthur was at work and that his mother had strictly ordered all of them to act as if nothing had happened and so all of them were doing just that.

But things were strained and Arthur had been to Hogwarts with the rat many, many times in the last few days to check on Albus, thinking none of them knew, but Molly had not only a tracing charm on him, but also a location charm. The moment Bill wrote that Harry shouted in excitement.

“Hey! If Arthur has been to that place in the last few days, then we will know where it is. Then we need not take Peter and we can go and see if we can find anything that we can use against the old Long Beard.” He giggled at the name he had given Albus as Snape rolled his eyes. Harry then wrote Bill.

*Can you tell me where Arthur had been in the last few days with Peter?*

*Yes Harry! Mother told me and Charlie about it after we were sure Arthur and the rat was asleep.*

*Could you tell me about where the location charm specified they had been?*

*Well Harry, they went to Hogwarts many times, at least three times a day. Then they went somewhere, Mum did not know that place and they had been to Diagon Alley and Arthur had been to the Ministry every day as usual.*

Harry looked at the others in excitement. “The unknown place, I am sure that it was that place Mrs. Longbottom said, especially if Weasley and the rat visited it at night.”

*Bill, did your dad go to the unknown place during the day or during the night? And did you ask your mum just where that place was located?*

*During the night Harry and yes that place Mum said was to the extreme North of Scotland, she said she did not know more than that.*

*"Well we could try and find out. The sheer number of wards on that place would mark it out." Harry was much exited.*

*"Well, do not hurry Harry." Nicholas cautioned him. "There may be many wizards who live there and who may be paranoid enough to ward their homes just as heavily as Albus would have. Do not forget that we are living in very dangerous times."*

*Will you be able to pin point that location a bit more clear than that?*

*Would you wait for a minute Harry? I will get back to you on that.*

*Bill wrote about ten minutes later on the parchment which Harry was looking at continuously willing for the words to appear. I just wrote to mum about it. Arthur is in the Ministry and the rat is with Ron who has standing orders not to bring him near mom. She is pretending that she has suddenly developed an allergy for rats in general.*

*Well, coming to your question, mom says that the location of that place is very near the Glen of Hascow if the location charm is right. That means to the extreme north that is very windy and famous for its terrible storms.*

*We are trying to go to that place and can you make sure that when Arthur comes home, your mum will keep him occupied till we are able to return. You could also ask her to stun the rat or place him under a sleeping spell?*

*Will do and I will confirm to you in a minute.*

*Harry, the rat is sleeping soundly and will not wake up before night unless enervated and Arthur is in the Ministry and when he returns, he too, will be occupied by mum and all of us.*

*She wishes you all the best and asks you to take care of yourself. Bye. Write if you want more help as I will go to my room at once when I reach home and will stay there till I get the all clear from you.*

*When Mr. Weasley returns please remove the tracing and the location charm on him, as Albus will be paranoid to the extreme of checking up on every small thing as the Longbottoms whom he punished so cruelly are gone. Bill, Mrs. Longbottom has told us some alarming stuff and it would not be wise for your mother to come under the scanner. Please talk to your mother on this and confirm this to me.*

Bill wrote after three minutes.

*I just wrote mother and she has affirmed to take off the charms the moment he comes home. I will make sure of that as well. Do not worry about it any more all right?*

*Bye Bill thanks and will do as you say. I will write you as soon as we return.*

Sirius looked at all of them. "Did you notice Bill called Weasley by name." Harry nodded his head, "But I hope they really do not give the game away before we are ready." Harry shook his head sadly, "It must be so difficult for them, though, to act and behave as if nothing has happened out of the ordinary."

Sirius said agreeing with Harry. "Gosh! It must be terrible Harry. To pretend as if nothing has happened. And Molly and the others felt so much anguish that Arthur had betrayed all of them. They would have to sit at the dining table as if nothing had happened and behave as if everything was fine and that Molly loved Arthur as ever and his children were very proud to be Weasleys. That is not even a punishment, it is cruel and Molly is really brave to take him on like this."

Remus shook his head. "Sirius you forgot one thing. Molly's father and her two brothers were killed in the first war. Molly will not let go of Arthur so easily. That is why she has ordered her children to stay put and go about their business as usual. She will extract her revenge from Arthur and it will not be pretty."

All of them agreed as they thought sympathetically of the lovely lady and her proud children who were now suffering so much. All because of one man, Albus Dumbledore. He had been responsible for so

much, Harry thought grimly and resolved for the umpteenth time to try and take him down soon.

Nicholas went to Mrs. Longbottom and told her they may be away for a while and Perenelle and Remus would stay with them till all the others returned.

Harry, Sirius, Snape and Nicholas left Potter castle to apparate to the Glen of Hascow and before they left wrote McGonagall who had left for Hogwarts to be there when Albus woke up, to tell her the details of what they were planning to do and to warn them through the ring if Albus woke up so that they would immediately leave, if they had not returned by then.

Wasting no time, the four of them apparated to the Glen of Hascow and went to the lake in the Glen. From there they started placing location charms over a wide area, sweeping over the Glen and its surrounding area to find out magical residences of all types. They found eight. Nicholas and Sirius took the three places on one side of the lake and Harry and Snape the rest on the other side. Both Nicholas and Harry would be able to find out which wards had the magical signature of Albus. Who ever struck gold was to inform the other.

Nicholas and Sirius went through the three places in about fifteen minutes and found all of them to be mere residences. Harry and Snape also went through three in no time and the fourth residence was so fiercely warded with Dark and Black magic that Harry had to stop a good fifty feet away from the wards, wards that had the magical signature of Albus Dumbledore.

They had found the secret place of Albus Dumbledore. Harry sent the signal to Nicholas and Sirius and a minute later all the four of them were sliding through the wards, Nicholas and Harry taking Sirius and Snape with them. After they crossed the wards they had to spend the next fifteen minutes in cleansing themselves, as otherwise the residue magic that the wards sent to unwelcome guests would slowly destroy them.

Then all of them with invisibility charms, silencing charms, notice me not charms and a special charm to remove their magical presence

and their magical signature and an elf charm that Harry had wheedled out of Celly by convincing her he would not reveal to anyone about that particular bit of magic. It was the elf compatibility charm.

Harry cast that charm, rather applied it to himself and the others and all of them proceeded inside cautiously, watching for the dead attackers and walking in between two blocks of transparent, but strong stones.

The elf magic that Harry had learnt from Celly would all but make them invisible to the elves, who, if had been ordered to attack by Albus would not be able to, as this magic would not register their presence in the house and the elves would not know.

Celly had not been easy to convince and it was only after Harry had told her he needed it to make sure that Albus would not use the elves to attack and if they did, they could easily capture Harry and the others and give him to Albus, who would kill them like he did his grandparents and parents that she had consented.

It was after this and with a promise that Harry would never reveal it to anyone else that Celly had taught the complicated magic to Harry and also had taught basic elf warding and spell casting.

All of them went slowly but did not encounter the dead creatures as Albus had probably thought that as no one apart from Peter and Arthur knew the place, and the wards were so powerful and evil that other means of protection was not needed.

It was true that the wards would have fried anyone who would have tried to go through them, but Harry and Nicholas had the means to slide through any wards and had Sirius and Snape tried to breach these wards, there would not have been ashes left of them to bury.

But Nicholas and Harry had the unique ability to slide through the wards, any wards, like Nicholas and sometimes Perenelle had done so many times in the past to spy on Albus and afterwards on Snape and Remus's conversation and so many other things.

Nicholas and Perenelle had warned Harry to use his gifts sparingly and with good reason as these gifts would harm him more than Albus himself if they were used with wrong intent. Harry had taken the warning seriously and he had made sure that any spell he would cast, he would be careful with.

They went to the main door and pushing it slowly, went inside. The room that they entered was dark and nothing could be seen at first glance. There seemed to be no windows and as Harry cast a mild lumos, they saw that the entire room was stone as Mrs. Longbottom had said and indeed there were no windows or any furniture except three chairs by the fire place.

They divided into groups and Harry and Snape went to the dungeons, while Sirius and Nicholas went searching on the floor they had entered as well as the first floor.

Harry went down first, sending his magic down the steps and finding nothing dangerous; Harry and Snape went down swiftly and started poking around. They did not find anything of importance there except a small package that said 'Potters'. Harry frowned for a second, before he cast a spell to check if the package had wards on it. There was nothing and Harry took the package and went upstairs with Snape.

Albus had been very confident that no one would ever find out this place that except the wards on the boundaries that would keep everyone away, there was nothing here that was warded or kept under intense protection spells.

They found Nicholas and Sirius just finishing the ground floor and all of them trooped up to the first floor. There was nothing there except three huge rooms that were probably the rooms of Albus, Arthur and Peter and a very big library that seemed to be overflowing with books of all types.

Nicholas and Snape stayed there to start packing up various Black magic and other ancient texts that Albus had pilfered from Grindelwald and Voldemort and from his early days in Knockturn Alley.

Harry and Sirius started going into the bedrooms. They found nothing of importance in Arthur's and Peter's bedroom. Then they went into the Master bedroom that belonged to Albus. The room was huge with a big bed in the center and a huge cupboard occupying one whole side of the room.

Harry cast revealing spells on it and for the first time, he found wards, blood magic wards and Black magic wards on it. He asked Sirius to run to Snape and help him and send Nicholas here to help to break the wards. Sirius wasted no time and in two minutes Nicholas was there in Albus's bedroom helping Harry to break the wards. They did not be careful with the wards, as they were running out of time so they just bombarded the wards away, with Harry blasting the wards and Nicholas on the look out of any back lash from them.

But the wards too, were relatively simple for Harry and Nicholas told him not to be surprised.

"Albus just made sure that Arthur and Peter could not break them and take them away without his knowledge that is all. He has no wards or no protective enchantments of any type anywhere here as he has been so confident of himself. And why not Harry no one has even known this place has existed so why would they enter?"

"But did not Albus feel that he had to invite anyone to his home. I mean he is a popular person after all, he would have had the necessity of entertaining people from the Ministry or otherwise?" Harry asked him even as he was blasting more wards.

As Nicholas watched Harry remove the final ward, he replied, "I have been to his home, it is in Hogsmeade and it is very beautiful. He has elves there and he entertains quite a lot in the summer when the School is closed. No, this place is for the evil deeds he has committed, Harry and a place to plot and plan them, this is not for entertaining."

The last ward was down and now Harry and Nicholas went near it and slowly and carefully opened the door. The cupboard actually opened into a room and Harry and Nicholas walked inside and looked around. There were many books, that Nicholas started packing and various cupboards that Harry started opening.



In the third cupboard Harry found some fifty diaries and about two hundred vials of memories. All of the memories that were in the vials had blood wards on them. Harry quickly went to work and started breaking the wards carefully and as Nicholas had finished with the packing of the books, Harry had broken through the last ward.

“Did you see this? With this alone we can bring him to his knees.” Harry said in a very satisfied tone and conjuring a big wooden box he placed all the memories and the diaries. The diaries, except one were not warded. Albus was certainly one confident individual.

Harry called to Snape through his mental link. Snape and Sirius had cleaned out the library and all the four of them hurried out and ran through the wards and Harry and Nicholas holding both their booty as well as one other person slid through the wards and the next second apparated back to Potter castle. They had decided to cleanse themselves there of the Black magic in the wards.

All four of them ran inside shouting with glee.

Harry took out his parchment and wrote Bill Weasley; *Hi, Bill thanks a lot to you and your mum. Because of the location charm, we have found out a real lot. We have come back safely and we struck gold there. Please remove the sleeping charm on the rat and also the tracing and the locator charms on your dad. Please confirm both actions.*

*Confirmed Harry, Arthur is at home and the minute he came mum took off the charms and I have removed the sleeping charm on the rat my self. Great that you found something and no I will not write anything now and I will not breathe a word to anyone except mum and that too only after you say so. Good luck and bye.*

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Albus Dumbledore woke up with a groan. He had been ill and now as he got up, feeling perfectly all right in his body, his mind was giving him a lot of unrest. The first thing he thought was who was going to be missing this time. The last time he had been so sick Harry had vanished and now, he stiffened suddenly, getting up swiftly. The

wards of his stone castle had been breached and his cupboard had been broken.

He sent a signal to Arthur and Peter. Both of them came to find Albus in a towering rage. "The wards of the Glen had been breeched." Was all he said, as Arthur gasped and Peter squawked?

"Merlin! Who and how and how and who? Who?" Wormtail almost wet his pants and he looked up at Albus in terror.

Arthur was no better. He simply sat down and as there was no chair he fell down to the ground and did not even realize it. He kept looking at Albus with so much fear, fear that was immobilizing him. His life was ruined. If anything of what they had done had come to light Molly would kill him and what the Order and his children would do..., he shuddered and then he found he could not stop shaking as he stammered at Albus, "Who was it?"

Albus shook his head, "I do not know. Come on," he growled impatiently as they continued to stare at him. All three of them hurried out, Peter in Arthur's robe and ran down, to the wards and silently apparated.

The next second, a message appeared in Nicholas's parchment from McGonagall. *Albus awake and has left with Weasley and rat. Be careful.*

At the same time Bill wrote Harry *Arthur left five minutes ago by floo with the rat in his robes. All charms are off so we do not know where he has gone. Most likely it will be Hogwarts. Bill.*

Albus and Arthur with Peter apparated to just inside the wards and a minute later the rat became Peter and joined them. Albus was frowning even as Arthur was talking, "There seems to be no signs of any breach in the wards. You check here Albus and Peter you go that side and I will this side." And Arthur started walking fearfully, his wand ready to attack in a moment's notice.

They met at the doors in fifteen minutes, and Peter was stammering, "All clear," after Albus who had finished checking first and Arthur who came next and all of them went inside cautiously. Once inside, Albus

ran to his room along with the other two and opened the door and a second later he screamed and fainted on the floor.

Arthur and Peter looked at each other and then enervated Albus and then all three of them walked around the room, Albus giving small sobs of terror. The room that had the cupboard was just the same. But the cupboard was open and all of them went inside to see it stripped. There was nothing in that room, nothing. Not a piece of paper no potions vials, no quills and absolutely nothing.

“This is the room where we had our more important memories hadn’t we,” and to his horror Arthur had tears pouring down his cheeks. They were crucified, dead. Nothing could ever save them. Peter had crumpled on the floor and was sobbing and what made it truly horrifying was the fact that Albus was no better.

Albus sat down in the middle of the empty room his head in his hands. He was ruined was the one thought that was running around in his head. After an hour when all of them were still in the same place they were before, Arthur looked up from where he had been sitting, next, to Albus.

“Who has the strength and the capacity to come here and remove all this? This cupboard was very heavily warded wasn’t it? What about the rest of the house? Come on Peter, let us check and then we should decide.” Arthur stood up and dragging a frightened Peter went to the door and walked out. They first went to their rooms and finding nothing untoward went to the library.

Arthur yelled, “Albus get the hell here.” Albus came running his wand at the ready and stopped in shock. The library was empty. Totally, there was not a single book in there. He fainted a second time and was enervated by an angry Arthur.

“You must get a hold on yourself. If you keep fainting then how are we to find the person or persons who has done this and we also have a major problem on our hands.”

Albus glared at him, “More than this?” he snarled at Arthur.

Arthur did not bat an eye. "Equally important in my opinion Albus, the Longbottoms are missing."

"What?" Albus shrieked, almost coming apart at the seams, "how can that be? I had the dead taking care of them." He whispered staring at Arthur totally bewildered and absolutely out of his depth and unable to understand and make sense of what was happening.

Albus was silent for some time and then he straightened out and squared his shoulders. "We just have to wait and see who has the gall to take the things from here and who rescued the Longbottoms. Where are Neville and Augusta and what are they saying?"

"They were right there till yesterday before, Augusta could not stand the Ministry people walking in and out of her home. I went there too, and went armed with a search warrant along with the aurors and they are not there and there is no magical trace of them ever being there."

"So where is Augusta now?" asked a frustrated Albus tearing at his hair.

"Well Augusta has gone away with Neville to a relative's home till the Ministry persons have finished their search once and for all. Where she is and with whom, no one knows and she has given the elves the right to allow any Ministry official to search for her son and daughter in law." Arthur told him bitterly.

Arthur was for the first time questioning the wisdom of doing dubious acts for the money he had been so gladly receiving till now. But that was when the going was good. Now it looked all three of them were going to get caught nicely and while Albus and Peter would simply vanish and start afresh with a new name, he could not do so because of his family.

He felt like howling as he thought of Molly and his children, the disappointment and the loss of their love and their respect would kill him. Arthur really loved his wife and he adored his children and he knew he would die at the betrayal that would see in their faces. He turned to Albus, "You must do something, if Molly comes to know or indeed if anybody comes to know, it will be far better that we kill ourselves off right here before that happens."

Arthur continued trying to make Albus see some kind of sense and do something worth while instead of simply fainting every two minutes. "We had the strongest wards here and while the outer wards have not been breeched, the cupboard has been broken and very ruthlessly, too. Who has the kind of power for this type of magic is what we must be trying to find. Such magic potential is very rare and there must be very few of such wizards or witches around."

"As far as I know there are only two persons who have this type of power. They are the Flammels. Both of them don't know this place existed and I cannot go to them with this." Albus said with a finality that was depressing.

"Harry?" Arthur asked with hope. If it was anyone they knew it would make the attack on them easier and they would know just what they were encountering and what they were against. This not knowing anything was killing him.

"Not a chance. Yes he is probably capable of tearing down the wards, even that I doubt, but assuming he does, even then he does not know how to slide. That is an area of intent and will magic and this breaking and entering for no purpose would harm the slider."

"Well this place has a lot of evidence to give after all."

"Yes Arthur but how will Harry know that. No one, no one except the three of us knows about this place. There are no elves here to even suspect them and all three of us have only things to lose by this."

Albus knew he was defeated. Who ever had the diaries and the vials also had the three of them. What Voldemort and later he as Voldemort had done and bonded the death eaters to following his every whim and fancy, was now being done to him and he could not do a thing about it.

All three of them went out and apparated to St. Mungo's and met the healer whom Albus had placed under the imperious and asked her about the Longbottoms.

She looked around nervously as she answered, "I really don't know what happened, Sir. I went in the morning to check up on them as usual and found them gone."

"When did the old lady and her grandson last visit? Did they come out of turn?" Albus was also using a mild probe and was looking into her mind for the truth of her answers. She shook her head, "No, Sir they came on their usual visit one month ago."

Albus removed the imperious and simultaneously obliterated her on all queries and dealings she had with the Longbottoms and left after he asked her the same questions once again with seriousness and concern and left after he thanked the healer profusely for assisting him.

He was stumped and he had no answers and now petrified as he also had Voldemort to worry about that Arthur and Peter did not know. Till he came to know about the person who had the memories and the diaries that would make the entire Wizarding World to thirst for his blood with a ferociousness that would make him long for death he had to lie low.

If the more creative of them or people like Minerva or Moody got hold of him, he knew the blessedness of death would be a utopian dream as he would be made to suffer long and hard on Mother Earth.

He thought for a mad moment that he would end it all, but his love of life and the power, position and the prestige he was enjoying was too tempting for him to carry out the plan to *avada kedavra* himself. He still had so much of money and so much of the Stone that if anything dangerous did happen; he could always disappear and live under a new identity.

That was when he remembered he and the others had a spare Gringotts key to his main vaults in a small box by the diaries. "The Gringotts key, Arthur, Peter. All our keys were with the diaries in that small box." Albus gasped, he could not speak as the others too gasped along with him. Then Peter changed and Arthur and Albus with glamour charms apparated to Diagon Alley and ran towards Gringotts.

Albus strode in Gringotts and approached the nearest goblin and spoke as politely as he could in the circumstances, "Please, we would like to access our vaults. Here are our keys. May we be escorted as we have some important business there?" The gobbling nodded its head, bringing out a relieved sigh from the two of them and a relieved squeak from Peter in Arthur's robe pocket.

The gobbling took the key and the key crumbled in its hands and Albus simply stared at it. "What was that? Why did it not crumble away like that?" he asked the goblin, bewildered and wondering dazedly about what this was and what this meant.

It meant nothing good and the goblin looked at Albus sternly and hissed malevolently to him, "You have a standing in the Wizarding World I presume by the amount you had in these vaults before you closed it and that is why you are being spared. This man is let off simply because he is with you. Otherwise I would have hauled you before the goblin court."

"Why? What happened to the key? I was rather indisposed and I need something rather urgently from my vault. That was why I came. Please be patient enough and tell me what the problem is?" Albus was reduced to begging as he wished desperately that at least the vaults be safe.

The goblin looked at Albus sternly. "It is only the fact that so far in your dealing with us you have never done anything less than honest that you are standing here instead of being taken away by our guards for 'special treatment', other wise," the goblin was cut off at that moment by a desperate Albus, "Why? What happened?"

"You had sent a representative just an hour ago to remove the three vaults that you have just come to me about." As Albus looked at him stunned, the goblin continued, "Now I am busy did you want anything else?" the dismissal was clear in the goblin's voice and Albus walked out in a daze unable to believe what he had just heard.

He was penniless. All his money was in these vaults that he had in another name and that was gone. The huge amount of Stone he had made and stored in these vaults was gone. He now had only one

vault in his own name and that was worth only about a few hundred galleons.

To tell the goblins he had sent no one would be futile, as the person who came there would have had to use his blood. Albus gritted his teeth. He had probably taken the blood when he was not well. But how? He must go back to Hogwarts and ask Minerva about it. Albus almost went inside to ask the goblins who that representative was. Then he paused. If he did so and cried fraud, all his accounts and dealings would come to light and that would not do. His shoulders slumped and he walked away with Arthur trailing behind him in horror at what had happened.

All three of them apparated back to the Glen and went inside. They did not notice a pair of eyes that followed them now that the eyes knew the secret of the Glen. Albus's head was spinning. Someone had virtually made him penniless in one afternoon as Arthur had been to the Glen the day before and Peter had been there just this afternoon to check up on the place as Albus who held the wards was incapacitated.

Now in about a space of two to three hours someone and Albus had no idea who had virtually stripped him of everything. He had some potion made with the stone that would last for a few years and then he too, would die. In the few years till death would visit him, he would be penniless.

Suddenly another thought came to him that made him scream and shrivel up. Voldemort! One diary had all the secrets about Voldemort that he had not even told Arthur or Peter saying that the particular diary had thoughts and feelings about his childhood and so was barred to them. Both of them had thought that it was about childhood fantasies that would be embarrassing now and had smilingly left it at that. Albus had placed special wards on it to prevent any curiosity on their part and they too, had respected his wishes and had not gone near it.

Albus closed his eyes and recalled the golem that would have marked the junior death eaters tonight and excusing himself to go to the bathroom where he had asked the golem to come, annihilated it,



burnt it and flushed the ashes. Voldemort would have to go back into hiding for an indefinite period of time.

The only persons who could aid him to find out the culprits were the Flammels, but Albus knew they would kill him first, find out the other person who had such large amounts of the Stone later and then destroy him or her as well. The death eaters would be baffled, but that could not be helped and he like a fool, he thought bitterly had gone and rescued the imprisoned death eaters to aid him to defeat Harry and now all of them were on the loose. He went out slowly and sat down with the others.

“You must go back Albus as must we. We will try and cry foul and plead the imperious or anything. In fact.” Said Arthur brightening as he thought hard and fast to save his life and his position in the family and the love of his wife and children, “if any one threatens us we will say that we were under a charm of sorts and Peter, you must spend time as a rat from now on till suspicion is averted from all of us. Albus after he transforms cast the special curse and make him as a rat only.”

As Peter loudly protested, Arthur continued pacifying him, speaking to him in a soothing tone, “Peter, Albus will be able to place the counter charm on you in a jiffy once we know who has us by our thumbnails and then after finishing off with them, he will cast the counter on you. But till then Peter you must hide. This way you can continue to be with us and as Ron’s pet till all of us are safe.”

That seemed a good idea. Albus cast the charm on Peter as soon as he transformed and he did not notice another spell that hit Peter at the same time that would keep him as a rat till that particular spell was taken off.

Now the eyes knew the equation and also the fact that there were no horcruxes that Albus had made by the next words that Albus uttered. “I don’t even have horcruxes,” the eyes drew a sharp breath as the words spilled out as that was the only reason Albus was alive all this time. “No horcruxes as they would make me like Voldemort; as removing a part of my soul with all the Black magic I have been

performing will remove my benign persona. Now I don't have the Stone as that has been stolen away from me and I don't have the money that making a fresh batch will take. I don't know how long I will live without it really."

That put Arthur into a fresh panic as without Albus he and Peter could as well die. "Why don't we sell this place and try to make a fresh batch with it? What about the Potters portraits that we stole from Potter castle and Godric's Hollow? We could sell that to Harry Potter anonymously and get some money. He would be willing to pay anything to speak to his mother and father."

Albus stared at him as if he was mad. "Are you crazy? I was the one who killed Lily. The first thing she would say when she sees her son will be 'Harry, Albus killed me, not Voldemort'." He got up to see if the package was there. He had a feeling that it would also be missing.

Who ever had stolen his things were very clever as they had also made sure that Albus would not be able to access it by calling for it by using the bonding spell that he had placed on everything. That meant that who ever it was, was very powerful and was keeping his things behind powerful wards.

His thoughts unwittingly went to Harry. He too, had vanished like this and he too, had been behind powerful wards that nullified the blood call. He frowned as the similarities between the two events played out in his mind. The two times he had been sick something terrible happened. Who was behind it and how did they succeed baffled him.

If it were Harry, he knew he did not have to wait long as Harry would somehow make sure that he knew, that Harry held all the cards and come after him to avenge his family. Then the Prophecy would come into play and while Albus would play to win, he knew at the bottom of his heart that there was a chance he could lose as well.

The package was missing. "It is Harry Potter. I know it. You were right Arthur. It is Harry Potter." Albus whispered as all the similarities ran around in his mind. "The only question is who is helping him?"

"How do you know?" Arthur asked scared.

"I know because the last time I was sick he disappeared. This time it is the Longbottoms and all this. Someone is helping him, someone powerful and strong. Harry cannot do this by himself. Who told him about this place and who helped him take away everything from here?"

Albus suddenly came to a decision and he stood up. "Be as you are Arthur. The worst that can happen is we are found out publicly. The second thing we have to deal with is if we are blackmailed. If we are blackmailed we will buy our way out with the dead attackers I can create and with killing curses. If we are found out publicly, denounce me and claim I put you under the imperious and Peter will not transform as he has become a rat till I personally take off the curse. I will go into hiding and assume a new identity and we will meet then. Now we will sell this place at once and act as if everything is as normal as ever. Who ever has taken all this can come to us with their demands. Till then we lay low. All right?"

"Why can't you do that now, Albus? You could go into hiding and be safe. Peter can be with you and I will help you as ever." Albus nodded his head. "Yes, I would have done so, but I want to take care of one thing. Harry, I want to kill him at all costs. I will do that at the earliest opportunity at Hogwarts, appearances be damned and then run from there. I will inform you where I will be later on, all right?"

Arthur had to nod his head. He hardly had any choice. He picked up the rat and Albus and Arthur apparated to Diagon Alley with their glamour on and put the house on the Glen on the market. As they wanted money at once, they had to settle for a pitifully small amount and parted ways.

Albus as himself reached Hogwarts and went inside late at night to find a solicitous McGonagall waiting for him. On an impulse he asked her, "Minerva, when I was ill, was you ill as well and who all came to visit with me?"

She shook her head. "No I was quite fine. In fact I have been in and out of the School purchasing and visiting. Of course, Albus I have

also been inquiring after you to Poppy regularly and have visited you along with the other professors at least once a day.”

He smiled his thanks at her before continuing to his office. He knew it was Harry. It was a gut feeling and gut feelings were never wrong. He would kill Harry when he got a chance be it in School or elsewhere and at least make sure that he would win the Prophecy. He could then change his identity and move about freely and become a new dark lord and earn back that entire fortune he lost.

He reached his office and then relaxed. He was feeling a bit better now that he had thought of a way out of this mess. It would mean long hours of hard work get back his entire fortune and once he made the Stone again he would have a long life in which he could do anything. With this thought he went to sleep after a short day but a horrifying one.

End of Chapter – 20

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## Chapter – 21

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Harry, Snape, Sirius and Nicholas apparated into Potter castle and they stopped the moment they entered and cleansed the entire Black magic residue from sliding through the wards. After they had removed the entire residue they danced their way inside to find Perenelle, Remus, Neville and Augusta Longbottom sitting in the drawing room quietly talking among them.

They looked up as the four of them came, shouting with glee and Neville and Augusta smiled while Perenelle and Remus laughed.

“What are you shouting about with such glee? Am I to assume your little expedition went off well?” she asked smiling as Nicholas came to her and dragged her up and started dancing with her. After five minutes where all of them danced and danced, Nicholas led them all to the library and then told them what had happened.

All of them opened the booty and Augusta and Perenelle started categorizing all the books that Snape, Sirius and Nicholas had sweepingly packed into huge conjured cartons. They piled the books into Black, Dark, and Light, and research, ancient and unknown category. There were hundreds of books and that task would take them sometime.

Snape, Sirius, Remus and Nicholas helped by an awed Neville whose eyes were still shining with happiness at seeing his mother sane, were sifting through the diaries and trying to put together all that they knew with what they would find in the diaries. They would view the memories later.

Harry started sifting through the diaries randomly, before he turned to Neville, “Hey, how is Mrs. Longbottom? Is she sleeping now?” Neville nodded, grinning at Harry. “Yes, Harry she stayed awake for a little while and slipped off to sleep. It is Dad who is yet to get up.”

Harry nodded his head and went through the diaries, not noticing the sudden tenseness in Snape, Sirius and Remus when Harry had

asked Neville about Alice. They relaxed once Harry looked normal and went about his task of looking through the diaries.

It had been pure luck that Molly had cast the location charm and the tracer and it was also luck that Alice woke up and spoke to Harry who in turn spoke to Bill through the parchment and then finding the castle and then plundering it, all tied up nicely. They had Albus where they wanted him and all of them knew they had defeated the evil wizard that Albus was.

Harry at that time remembered the small package that said 'Potters'. He was about to remove it from his pocket when McGonagall's message came to Nicholas and at the same time Harry's parchment had Bill's message.

"Now that we know where Albus's hideout is I will go there and find out how they are reacting. Who knows we may get a clue about their next plans or if they have some more stuff stashed away somewhere. Meanwhile Harry and Perenelle, I want you and the others to go through these diaries and try and find out about his horcrux status." Seeing them nod their heads, Nicholas just vanished on the spot to slide along to the Glen where he arrived after the others and found them checking the wards.

He cleansed himself and waited for Albus to make the discovery of the open cupboard. He was not disappointed in his reactions. He followed them all around till Albus reached Hogwarts and went to sleep. Nicholas did not waste a moment. He apparated to Potter castle and went through intense cleansing that he was unable to do after he slid out of the Glen.

He ran inside to find the others still pouring through the diaries. He clapped his hands and asked for attention. "Come on, all of you, we have a lot of work to do now. Harry you write Bill and ask him to stun the rat and place a sleeping spell on Arthur so that he will not wake till tomorrow morning and ask Molly to be ready with the kids for a meeting. Nell, you call the death eaters and the Order members and ask them to come over to the cottage. Fawkes will take care of Albus and inform us if anything is untoward. Come on let us get going."

“Why Nick? What did you find that makes you run like this?” asked his wife as she stood up to comply with his orders as did Harry, who was already beginning to write Bill. “Will tell you shortly Nell,” was all he said.

In one hour all the Order members, Hermione, the rest of the Weasleys except Arthur, Turdin and the death eaters and their children assembled in the small cottage and looked around at the others wanting a clue as to why they had been called.

The death eaters especially were anxious, angry and nervous. Today Voldemort was to mark their children and all of them were waiting for his call and were fearful that this time was eating into that.

“Flammel, I want you to first give permission to one of us to wait outside this bubble so that if Albus called we can be warned.” Bellatrix asked Nicholas as he smiled at her.

“Not necessary Bellatrix, as Voldemort will not call for now, it is to speak about it to all of you that I have called for the meeting. All of you may relax. We are in a time bubble and I have Fawkes looking over Albus and we will be warned if anything untoward happens. Now Harry, Sirius, Severus and I went to the Glen of Hascow where Albus has his hide out a fact that we knew purely on luck when Harry asked Bill about Arthur’s whereabouts. Molly had a tracer and a location charm on him, and she was able to give us the general area from where we took over.

“Now I am going to show you the memories of what we found in the Glen of Hascow and also what I found when I followed Albus from there. I discovered a lot of things and we have a lot of work to do before we can leave for our homes again.”

All of them watched spell bound as they saw the way Harry and Nicholas had traced magical residences and all that they found and the way they returned. Then Harry and the others who had not heard what had happened from Nicholas when he went to spy on Albus watched equally stunned as all of them heard the reactions of Albus and the other two and the final comments of Albus who stated in no uncertain terms that he would kill Harry Potter come what may and then go into hiding.

There was a deafening silence as all of them stared and stared and tried to come to terms with all that they had seen and heard. It was Harry who broke the silence and made the first comments.

“So there are two things. Voldemort is as good as gone as Albus will not do anything till or call anyone till everything dies down and he comes to know what happened to the diaries and the memories. The second thing is he is going to kill me as soon as I step into Hogwarts.” Harry softly spoke into the silence.

“Correct,” Nicholas affirmed and then continued, “there is also one more thing Harry, he does not have horcruxes.” Nicholas’s eyes gleamed as he spoke.

Perenelle jumped as did Bellatrix, Lucius and the others. “Albus is mine” a dozen voices shouted, Bellatrix, Lucius, Rudolphus, Rabastan, Avery, in fact all of the death eaters and Minerva, Moody, Amelia Bones and in fact the entire Light was also thirsting over his blood.

Harry stood up and shouted for silence. “Albus is mine.” His voice rang out as all of them stopped their shouting to listen to him. “All of you have forgotten the Prophecy. Please allow me to kill him. Also it was my mother who found out about him and prepared and got us all together and I have sworn on her memory I will destroy Albus, the rat and Arthur Weasley. Please, while I know all of you have enough cause to want him for yourself, please give him to me to fulfill the Prophecy and allow me to live my life in peace.”

All of them were silent as they thought that one over. “Well can we look and help if it is necessary?” Bellatrix asked with a smile, her first smile towards Harry, Harry in return grinned at her. “Hey! The more the merrier. In fact we should all go and confront him together and get things out in the open and then punish him.”

Harry turned to Nicholas and whispered something to him and then Harry went to the death eaters and started removing their dark marks for ever. “Now that Voldemort is well and truly dead and Albus will not bring him back, I really do not think you need this. Of course you cannot go out as you are, but all of you can certainly change your



appearances and live an honest life helping us in setting the Wizarding World straight without any fear.”

Bellatrix could not speak as the mark vanished from her arm forever and she was released from a life of a slave to be free. Two small tears flowed down her cheeks and she stood up and went to Harry who had now removed the marks of her husband, Rabastan and Lucius and was starting on Parkinson and pulled the startled boy around and hugged him fiercely.

“You are a fool Harry Potter. You could have bought us and ordered us around for the rest of our lives for removing the horrible mark and here you are requesting us to help. Silly boy. We belong to you, mark or no mark and you will find every death eater here willing to kill for you and willing to die for you.” She hugged him once again.

“Of course we will help you, will listen to whatever you say Potter,” said a bemused Lucius in a thick voice as he struggled to control his emotions. The others as Harry went around and effortlessly removed their marks, also solemnly repeated what Bellatrix and Lucius had said.

After all the marks had been removed, Harry and the others decided to go to Hogwarts and confront Albus. “Let us do it in the morning, Potter. Please, I want to spend some time celebrating this event and looking at my clean arm. Is that all right?” Bellatrix looked at him with pleading eyes and Harry looked at Nicholas who smilingly nodded his head.

“Minerva you go back to Hogwarts and stay there. All of you come to the Forbidden Forest after breakfast at about nine ‘o’ clock. We will then confront Albus.” Nicholas told them his eyes gleaming at the thought of confronting Albus Dumbledore.

All of them went to their homes, the death eaters to the Lestrage household to party all the night long celebrating their new found freedom and the Order to their respective homes.

“Molly,” began Nicholas only to have Molly turn to him in sadness, “Mr. Flammel, Arthur and Peter will sleep till tomorrow and we will bring

both of them to Hogwarts' with us. Do not worry." Nicholas did not say more and merely nodded his head and all of them went home.

They filled in Mrs. Longbottom and Neville who had opted to stay with Alice and Frank, and the first thing Neville told them as they entered was that Frank was awake and seemed fine.

"Dad has waken up, Harry and though he is a bit confused, he is fine. Mother is telling him everything slowly."

"Great, that is fabulous news Neville and we have a lot more for you and your gran. Can you fetch her so that we can tell you both?" Harry beamed at Neville, his jealousy all forgotten as he took in Neville's happy face. Neville ran to his grand mother to ask her to come down and soon they were briefed.

"I would very much like to accompany you Harry as I wish to be there when that excuse for a man receives his deserts." Mrs. Longbottom's eyes were flashing and Harry nodded his head.

"Of course, Mrs. Longbottom, you may come along with us, as can Neville. His parents' will be safe here till we get back." Harry smiled. On that note all of them went to bed.

Harry, Snape, Sirius and Remus went to Harry's room, to talk for a while before sleeping. As they discussed the events of the day, Harry suddenly remembered the small package he had removed from the Glen that said Potters.

"Sev, do you remember the package that I removed from the Glen that had my name on it." Harry removed the package that was in his pocket as he spoke.

Snape nodded his head as he looked curiously at the package. It was small, small enough to fit in Harry's hands, "It has the shrinking charm on it Harry. Set it on the bed and enlarge it." Sirius told him.

Harry set it on the bed and enlarged it. The package became huge. It looked like a crate that held precious items. Now all the others were interested as well and they crowded around as Harry started

removing the covers. It was indeed a crate and it was tightly sealed. Harry slowly removed the top cover and peered inside.

He gasped loudly, as Snape, Sirius and Remus also looked inside and Sirius yelled.

“James!!!!” he looked at Harry, “Merlin! Harry, these are the missing portraits of Lily, James, Uncle William and old Mr. Harrison Potter and their wives. God, Albus had stolen their portraits and sealed them so that your mother and the others especially Harrison Potter have many portraits in the Ministry and other important places of himself could not say a word against him.”

As Harry stared dumbfounded at the portrait of his father that was on the top Remus continued excitedly, “Yes Harry Harrison Potter would have started investigation into the killings and would have provided names that of all of us who had entry into the castle. To prevent that from happening Albus had them removed and sealed.”

As Harry still stood there in shock, Snape told him softly, “Harry don’t you see? These are the portraits of your family that Albus somehow managed to steal and deactivate and freeze so that all of them would not be able to do anything against him. Now activate and de freeze them and you will also be able to talk to your parents.”

Harry blinked at Snape. “Speak to my parents’?” he stuttered a gamut of emotions raging through him. Only that morning he had been crying for some contact that he could never have with his parents and here they were, just waiting for him. He could talk to them, Harry realized with a sudden comprehension that hit him hard, he could laugh with them, he could, could...

Merlin! Harry thought in a daze, the world was his limit as he could do just about anything with them. He would also have his parents; his parents would also be there for him, for ever and ever and ever.

He looked around at the others. Snape was looking a bit anxious as James had been his most hated enemy. He was not sure of his reception even after he had done so much. Sirius was already blinking back tears as was Remus as they kept looking at the portrait of their best friend and their brother.

Harry slowly lifted his father's portrait and staring at him were his eyes set in the most beautiful face he had seen. His mother was stunning with his green eyes and gorgeous auburn hair. In the pensieve she had been so sad and terrified about the fate of her only child, but here she had been frozen as she had been smiling at someone, most likely his father.

Harry held her reverentially as he gazed at her for a long time, and then setting her carefully aside he removed the other portraits slowly and arranged them neatly. He then cast the 'activate' and the de freezing charm at the portraits and in a second all of them blinked as they tried to get their bearings straight.

Harry and the others watched with bated breaths as James and Lily tried to get their orientation back after fifteen years. Harry was looking at his mother and father alternatively, while Sirius and Remus were staring at James holding their breaths in anticipation and excitement.

"James? Where are we?" asked Lily as she looked around and then her eyes fell on Harry. She blinked and she started at him and suddenly she beamed at him, unknowing tears falling from her eyes, "Harry? Oooooooooohhhhhhhh! Harrrrrrrrry! My baby you were saved, saved from that monster," she cried turning the attention of all the portraits to Harry.

James had been looking equally confused when he heard his wife's shriek and he turned to look at his son with wonder, his eyes filling up and overflowing.

All at once there was Babel of noise as all of them spoke together. All of them except Harry; who was staring at his parents and grandparents with so much of wonder, drinking them in and unable to say a word.

James did not recognize Sirius, Remus and Snape and to their eternal amusement thought they were friends of Harry. Harry slowly stepped to his parents and dragged Severus and introduced him first and then Sirius and Remus.

James was horrified to see Snape and he was angrily about to evict him, when Lily placed a hand on his arm, looking all the while at

Snape, "Thank you Severus, thank you, thank you, thank you for everything, Severus." She kept whispering much to Snape's embarrassment.

James was bewildered as were the other Potters. Harry smiled happily at all of them, "You know Mother," that sounded lovely, he thought as he continued more happily, "I am going to show all of you what happened and what we are going to do tomorrow. I will make it brief and we can talk fully tomorrow okay?"

Harry brought the pensieve and all the Potters clustered around to watch. Harry showed them his mother's memory, the meetings with the death eaters, the bonding with Sarina, the Flammels statements about Albus, the de aging of Snape, Sirius and Remus, a bit of his training, storming the Glen of Hascow and bringing the diaries and other things, the plans for tomorrow and removing the marks of the death eaters permanently.

The silent could be cut with a knife as James, Lily who was crying softly and the others were totally stunned by what had happened to their family and their only child because of the avarice of a man they had considered friend and followed him blindly.

Snape then pulled out memories of his own; the letter he had received from Gringotts and the meeting with the goblins and the oath he took to protect Harry, the approaching and telling Lupin, Minerva's inclusion, and the first time into the woods and bringing back Sirius.

"Thank you my lad. The help you have rendered this House cannot be put into words, Mr. Snape. All of us including Harry are forever in your debt." Old Harrison Potter told him in a gruff voice filled with emotion.

James could not say a word to save his life had he been alive. He kept staring at Snape, Sirius and a smaller Remus and then at Harry, not able to take in so much in one go.

"He is all right Jim-Jim," said Sirius softly seeing his best friend's confusion. Then slowly all of them started talking, Harry though kept largely silent as Lily started explaining to her husband and her in laws about her findings and how she had set everything in motion.

"I am so sorry that I took over the choice of making your decision for you James, but that late I really had no where to go and no one to trust. Severus had sent a letter signed in blood and I used that fact to beg him to save our baby. Will you forgive me?" she asked him, tears pouring down her eyes at the betrayal that he had in his eyes that she did not tell him about her aura sight or her findings.

He did not say anything, a fact that made Lily bend down in grief and Harry was wondering how to convince his father that his mother had done what she could at that time without alerting Albus to the fact she was aware of him and his duplicity.

It was Sirius who mended the breach. "If only we were more matured and more understanding, Lily would not have been so alone."

"Why Sirius?" James asked him the first words he had spoken since being activated, "Why did Lily think I would put my child's life in danger that she was not able to tell me of her suspicions or her sight? She could not trust me?" he asked his friend bitterly.

"No she could not," answered Sirius firmly shocking his best friend and forever earning the gratitude of Harry. "We were impetuous and had we known of this we would have run angrily to Peter and confronted him. Once Albus knew he was being suspected, he would have killed Harry, fulfilled the Prophecy and put you under the imperious and made you open and get out all the things from your vault. He would not even need to come in to your vault, James. He would have made you get it for him.

"Tell me truthfully James. I know I would have confronted not only Peter but also Albus and we would have ended up dead or worse. For Merlin's sake we are dealing with a man who was Heifer, Voldemort and an evil twisted ass. We would have run to him accusing him of wanting to do us harm and that would be the end of it."

James was not convinced, but he kept quiet, deciding to talk to his wife and friends in private later on. Then the talk went around to what they would be doing in the morning and the attitude of the death eaters and finally to the improvements that they had voted for to make in the wizarding world.

All of them went to sleep in the early hours of the morning though the portraits were still talking among themselves. James had forgiven Lily for keeping something like this from him, seeing the truth of Sirius's words. They were truly rash and overly forward in those days.

Snape was good, a fact that was shocking him even now and he was bonded to his son as family. That was bitter to take but James could hardly say anything in the light of all that Snape had done. Still it was a bitter pill to swallow. His face turned ugly with a helpless rage as he thought of the man he had worshipped and the man for whom he would have given his life.

He took a deep breath to calm himself as he leaned on his wife and allowed her to smooth out his sorrow as best as she could. If only he had been more mature, he sighed and smiled a small bitter smile. He hadn't and after fifteen years what was the point of if only's.

He hoped Harry would make him die a dog's death tomorrow, James thought with a sudden viciousness as he thought of all that Albus had done. Even that would be too little for him, the.

That was when Nicholas and Perenelle had entered their room to wake them up and he found to his amazement and happiness the portraits of his friend Harrison and William.

"Harry has the power to perform will and intent magic Harrison. You should be so proud of him. Against all odds he had triumphed with flying colors and has earned the respect of one and all." Nicholas told a proud and beaming Harrison about his great grandson. He and Perenelle chatted for some time, before they woke up Harry and the others.

Harry had already told them about the package, "Imagine my shock Sir, when I found them inside." He said beaming as Nicholas hugged him.

"Yes Harry, this is indeed a good omen. We will now go and deal with those three and then from now on, you can live your life in peace with Severus, Sirius and Remus as you planned at the very beginning."

“And both of you, too; please don’t say you don’t belong here. I will not accept it.” Harry told them grinning from ear to ear.

Perenelle hugged him, “Watch us Harry. Where will we go child? We will keep coming as long as we are around. You are family child and we are never letting go of all the four of you. This business with Albus has given us the precious gift of the four of you.” She finished softly.

Harry hugged her back just as fiercely as Harrison Potter looked on proudly at his great grandson who had been named after him, “Harry could you show us the will magic?” he asked that pride and love oozing from every pore of his portrait body.

Harry showed him an impressive array of will and intent magic as Nicholas watched him fondly. “Bravo!” Harrison Potter cried out as William Potter and Harry parents and his grandmothers looked at him with a little awe and a great deal of pride.

“Oh Harry, that was brilliant,” James was nodding vigorously as Lily exclaimed with pleasure, blossoming and increasing the happiness that Harry already had inside him making him flush shyly at their compliment.

“Well we must get going Harry, all the others would be there and we must not be very late.” Nicholas told him and after that Harry and the others rushed about washing and cleaning themselves and then hurried down after saying a quick ‘see you later to all the portraits’ and ran to have breakfast.

Harry asked the elves to put up the portraits where ever they would wants to be and was rewarded by Celly’s tears that ran down as she hugged him. “Oh Master Harry! You haves brought all of them back home. That is very nice Master Harry.”

She promised to take care of the portraits and then Harry went out with the others to meet Albus for a final confrontation, which Harry hoped he will come out successful and then go on with his life in a peaceful manner.

He had found his parents and his grandparents and all of them had been so proud and happy. Well, his Dad was obviously not happy



with Snape or with his mother at present for hiding things from him, but what the hell? All that would be blown over, if only he could do the right thing with Albus now.

Harry felt so contented that even Albus could not arouse an anger or rage in him. All of them hurried through breakfast and then apparated to the edge of the Forbidden Forest where the members of the Order and the death eaters were waiting for them. In Bill's hand was the rat and the Twins and Percy were levitating a sleeping Arthur.

Molly Weasley was looking devastated as she kept looking at the man who had ruined her life, killed her father and brothers and placed a debt they could never repay, on her children.

Nicholas and Harry went in first with invisible charms and stunned the portraits near the gargyle.

Then, Nicholas, Perenelle and Harry slid all of them by taking them in twos and threes throwing the others into total awe at the power Harry was exhibiting; into the wards and took them right to the gargyle outside Albus's office. All of them were there as Lily brought McGonagall, who had been staying at the castle.

"No one would disturb us here would they?" Nicholas asked her. "No one would, Nicholas as I asked Celly to come over and add a sleeping potion in all their food yesterday night. Of course the fact that there are only two professors made it very easy." She smirked.

Nicholas laughed and mentally told Fawkes to bring Albus to them.

Albus had woken up refreshed and he swore to himself again that Harry would be dead and gone on the first day after School re opened. Then Albus too, would be gone and he would emerge as another person and start off from there. Selling the Glen of Hascow place had given him the money to make a little more of the Stone, though it was a pitiable small amount, he could get by with it till he could make more money on the sly.

Yes, he had thought satisfied, that was what he would do. Then, he would become a Dark Lord, a Lord of a level that would put Voldemort and Grindelwald in the infant category, storm Gringotts, his

lips tightened as he thought of the day before, well, he would destroy Gringotts and take over not only the Potter vaults but all the money that was there and then the world would be his.

He finished his breakfast when he felt the presence of more people than should be in the castle. He frowned, but could not get more information than that, when Fawkes with a loud trill, swooped down on him and took a panicked Albus off with a mighty flash.

The next second Albus was deposited in the middle of a group of people he had never thought would be seen together. The Order, the death eaters, their faces twisted with fury, all of them with their left arms exposed and not a mark in sight, Albus was bewildered and as he looked around he gulped when he saw Peter and Arthur sleeping and the feeling of shock and astonishment at seeing all these people together slowly turned into fear.

That was when Harry, Nicholas, Perenelle came out from behind and Fawkes with a soft trill went to Nicholas's shoulder. Suddenly all the pieces fit into his mind. It had been Nicholas and Perenelle all along who had been helping Harry from when he had been taken away from the Dursleys. They had somehow known he was misusing the Stone and had stepped in to destroy him.

Harry stepped forward in the deathly silence that Albus could not fill for the life of him. There were too many persons to fight his way through and Albus for all his faults was not a fool.

With a flick of his hand, Arthur was awakened and another flick, Peter was standing up. Arthur looked around at the crowd that seemed to be so hostile and when he saw Molly, who was glaring at him with a hate he had not known she possessed, he crumbled, as did Peter who was already cowering.

"We wanted you for ourselves, Voldemort," Bellatrix said sarcastically, "but Harry drew the short stick and got to deal with the three of you. We are here for the show."

Harry had not told anyone what he intended to do with them and all of them were watching intently to see what punishment Harry would give Albus, Arthur and Peter.

"You should be seated on the sharp end of a spear and left slowly to die for the crimes you committed as Heifer, for Voldemort and the atrocities as Albus you will have to be dragged from the dead and punished. How could you, you had so much how could you Albus?" Minerva's voice broke on the last word as tears fell down her eyes as she looked with loathing at a man she had worshipped.

Albus and the other two gulped and Peter and Arthur looked confused at the Voldemort reference. But no one was ready to explain it to them unfortunately.

"Peter you are a rat who betrayed your friends. Sirius and Remus will decide what to do with you. I give you to them." Peter was trembling with fear. Sirius and Remus, Sirius was alive! What was happening here? Sadly no one told him as two boys he knew as Kent and Brent came up to him, ready to kill him when Harry intervened.

"If I may suggest, Sirius, turn him permanently into a rat, cast a repulsive charm on him, so that he would be no one's pet and let him loose. He would be fine that way." Peter was babbling now as Sirius and Remus with all their anger that made their spells that much more powerful, turned him permanently into a rat, Harry simultaneously cast the spell to give him some attributes of a real rat wandlessly in Parceltongue and cast a repulsive charm on him and then Sirius with all his might, kicked him with his foot.

Peter the rat now squealed and scampered away to spend the rest of his life in the gutter. His mind that was still that of a human would feel sick of eating from the gutter, but the rat in him would go there and his life from that moment was miserable and he would think again and again of his folly till the end of his life.

"Mrs. Weasley, Arthur is all yours." Harry told her as she with tears running down her face came forward. "Molly I am sorry, I will rectify, Molly I never meant to," was all he had time to say, when SLAP! Came her hand and connected with his cheek and he would have been thrown away if it were not for the crowd that was keeping him and Albus tightly hemmed in.

"How dare you? How dare you stand there and tell me you will rectify, Arthur? Can you? Can you bring back my father and my brothers who

were killed by you and Albus? Can you give me back my life and peace and happiness that I have lost forever? Can you rectify the shame that my children will bear for the rest of their lives? Can you rectify all that?" she stormed as she looked at him who was standing there with only one thought, "I have lost wife and my family" over and over again.

Arthur loved his wife and children. It was the love of making easy money that had lured him and later he had got in too deep to come out. Now he had lost his wife and his children forever and all that she said was true. He could not rectify. He was bad and evil not worthy of his beloved wife. His mind crashed. He became insane as his magic refused to support his traumatized mind.

Arthur Weasley became mad. He started laughing and crying at the same time. He broke his wand and looked at his wife, but not quite recognizing her, but knowing she was someone important. He had lost the ability to speak and to function. He just stood there crying and laughing for a while, before Perenelle ran her wand over him and pronounced him mad.

Arthur slowly walked away and spent the rest of his life as a beggar on the streets of Hogsmeade. He was always filled with sorrow and cried quite often, but never knew why. He could only utter the word Molly, but he did not know why he said it in the first place.

Every year on Halloween, a lady with red hair would come with her seven children and give him a set of new robes and winter clothing with tears in her eyes. He would cry seeing her and say Molly. After that lady died, her children continued it till he died with the name of Molly on his lips. He was buried at The Burrow beside his Molly by his children who hoped he would at least make up to her in the other world.

Harry now turned to Albus who was sweating and had wet his pants after he saw Arthur's condition as he stumbled out. Harry took out a small vial out of his pocket, checked it and put it back. Nicholas and Perenelle, who had given it to him the day before, frowned at that.

"You wanted a long life Albus did you not? Well, your wish is coming true." Was all that Harry said as he concentrated and put up his

hands staring at Albus all the while. Slowly a thick golden strand came out from his body pulsating and vibrating. It was his magic. All of them watched as Albus was petrified and stood in horror as he saw the magic literally pulled out of his body.

Harry soon had a huge ball of magic in his hands. He had not pulled out and emptied his magic core, but there was very little, too little for the core to heal and grow. He took his blood and added it with his own and grounded and bound the magic to Hogwarts. The magic hit the wards and Hogwarts pulsated with high energy.

Harry then bound the stunted magic that was inside so that it could never grow. Then he cut Albus's hand and with another vial of potion that he removed from his robes, bound Albus to Hogwarts forever.

Then he took out the small vial of the Stone that would make Albus live and then live, and forced it down his throat. Albus spluttered as he drank and once the potion went inside, he felt fresh and firm. Then with a potion to make him mute and deaf, Harry spoke to him.

"You will live forever, Albus. You will work in this School forever as her cleaner and take over from Flich. These are the last words you will hear. The blood ritual will make you a compulsive cleaner and while your mind will be alert and fresh, your body will not cooperate on any issue except to clean the school. You will for ever clean the School that you have defiled and you will never be able to hear or speak anything. While you may read, you will never be able to do magic for ever. Good bye Albus."

Those were the last words he heard and Albus Dumbledore lived forever cleaning the School he was once Headmaster of. He read and read, but there was nothing he could do as all his knowledge was useless. He had no wages as all his wages went to the School for reparation and he lived with the daily nightmare that woke him up in a sweat. Harry's words woke him up every night crying loudly, but as he was mute no words would come.

He read about Arthur's demise and felt bitter. He did not want a long life. He wanted to die. But he could not. He would live and there would be no respite for him. He would keep rushing to clean as it was a compulsive habit; he cleaned till he dropped on some days.

Harry had not given him the true stone as he led the others to believe. But he had given the Stone potion to make him strong. After fifty years of punishment, Harry stopped the stone potion that he would add in Albus's diet without his knowledge every year and Albus Dumbledore died that very night in his sleep. Harry fulfilled the Prophecy on that day.

The Wizarding World had been told that Albus Dumbledore had suffered a magical malady that left him mute and with a compulsion to clean. He also would not leave his beloved School. The Wizarding World swallowed the story fully and sympathized with him and prayed for his well-being.

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The Wizarding World had changed greatly in the last fifty years. There were sweeping changes that only made it a better place to live. The Secrecy Act was enforced and all creatures Light and Dark were given a place on the Wizengamot.

Bellatrix had three children, the eldest son she named Harry Sirius LeStrange. All three of them were respectable citizens of the society and did not follow their death eater parents who were still in hiding, according to the public.

Alice and Frank Longbottom had very normal lives, though Frank Longbottom was almost a squib. Neville was a happy boy who grew into a strong man.

Harry, Snape, Sirius and Remus passed out of Hogwarts with flying colors and had the life that Harry had wished for on the day they met him. A happy life. With the Flammels all the four of them enjoyed themselves and Harry especially bonded deeply with the Weasley's who had sacrificed so much.

Harry healed after he saw his parents and grandparents who loved him unconditionally. His father had even accepted Snape and was good natured to him for Harry's sake.

He later married Ginny Weasley with whom he started going out after School. The other three did not marry as like Sirius complained that

anyone one Harry's age and they felt they were cradle snatching and any one their age and the other person felt she was cradle snatching. They were doomed to a life of sacrifice, a tone that left Harry giggling.

All of them helped out with the rebuilding of the wizarding world and continued to work for its betterment.

The Order of the Phoenix was still there with the members being the original Order members and the death eaters who met at the Flammels cottage. They were the inner council, who actually made the laws that were later on passed by the Wizengamot.

They were a group of the most powerful witches and wizards belonging to the most oldest and influential families. They ruled the Wizarding World with a hand of iron. They in turn were ruled by the power of Harry James Potter.

Harry Potter had seven children and lived up to a ripe old age of one hundred and eighty two. He died in his sleep on his birthday and along with him died his first friend and brother, Severus Snape. Sirius and Remus had died some ten years before. Ginny had passed on three years before. Harry and Snape were given a small burial with only Harry's family and the children of the original council members and Nicholas and Perenelle in attendance.

He had changed the Wizarding World to an unrecognizable extent by working behind the scenes with no airs and no obvious show of his power, power of wealth or the power of his magic and he had changed his world for the better. A second after Harry and Snape died, their portraits activated and Harry hugged his mother and father for the first time. His happiness continued even after.

End of chapter - 21

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**COMPLETE**